

LPA DISTRICT 12 – NEWSCLIPS 1989 - 1993

Creator – ERICKA PEASLEY VOL. 2 S121211



No small achievement

9-8-89
Billy Barty, the 3-foot-9 actor who crusades on behalf of his Little People Liberation movement, is introducing an anthem and video. "From Where I Stand" has a "We Are the World" flavor, and features singer Carl Anderson. "It is a positive outlook toward life," Barty said, and will be released in October. Proceeds will fund scholarships and other programs, he said. Standing with 15 other dwarfs, Barty said: "We should be looked up to. We should not be judged by our size but for the space between our ears."

Short is an attitude

7/8/89
Entertainer Billy Barty says he wants the nation's big people to know that there's nothing they can do that little people can't do as well. The diminutive veteran actor and a cast of entertainers both big and small gathered at a Los Angeles recording studio over the weekend to lip-synch the video for Barty's upcoming record, "From Where I Stand." The disc trumpets the rights of small people.

Video for the 'little people'

9-17-89
Entertainer Billy Barty says he wants the nation's big people to know that there's nothing they can do that little people can't do as well. The diminutive veteran actor and a cast of entertainers both big and small gathered at a recording studio Saturday to lip-synch the video for Barty's upcoming record, "From Where I Stand." The disc trumpets the rights of small people. "It's going fantastic. We have 80 little people and celebrities all having a great time," Barty said in a telephone interview during a break in filming. "It's dedicated to the 37 million people in this country with a disability," Barty said. "That's what we're trying to do — depict little people doing things that big people can do."

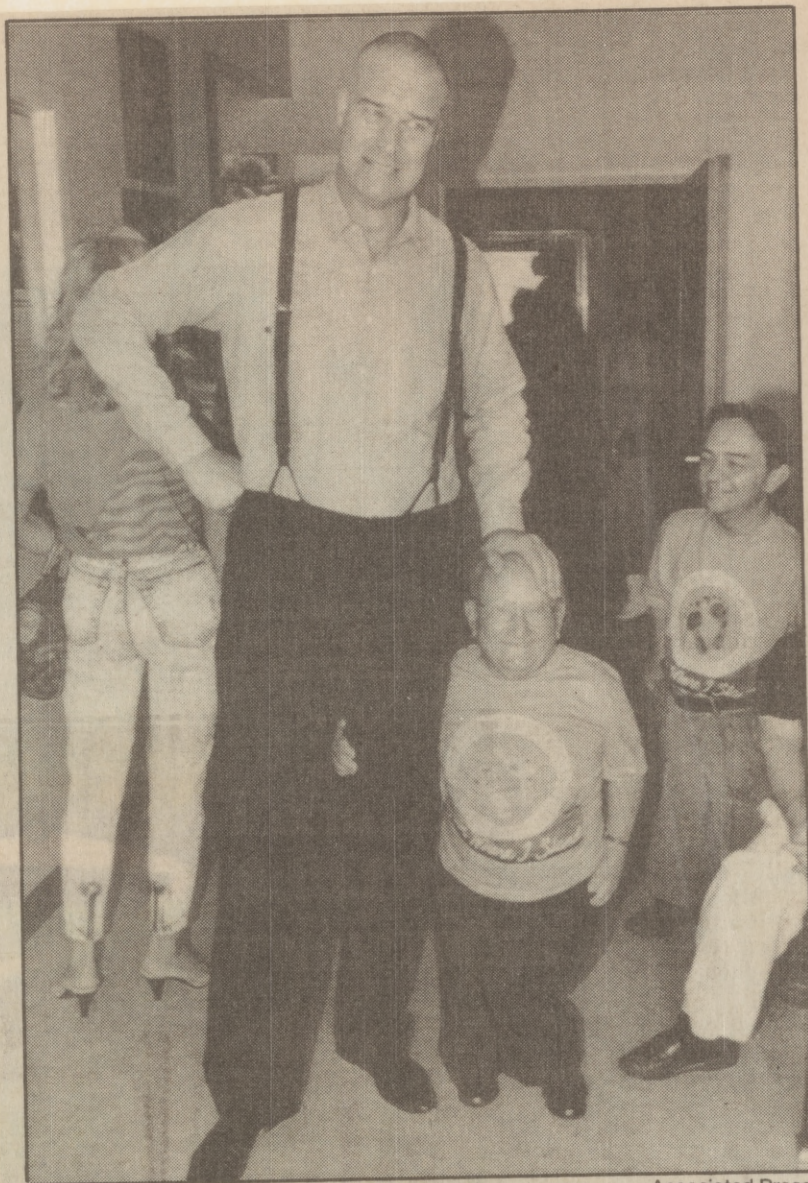


From the desk of

ERIK DAVIS

Ruth Bosse - Laugh In
Richard Mull - Right Ct
Donald O'Conner - dancer
Singer

Daryl - Newhart
Marty Ingels - comedians



Associated Press

Friends in high places

During production of "From Where I Stand," which spotlights attitude and architecture problems that little people and disabled people face, actor Richard Moll of television's "Night Court" plants his palm on Billy Barty, the program's front man.

Little Peoples' motto is 'Think Big'



K.P. Photo courtesy of Heather Davis

Heather Davis (c), with friends, smiles at the '89 LPA Convention in Baltimore.

Valerie Villa
Feature Editor

When first seeing junior Heather Davis walking through the halls, one might stop and stare. This is not uncommon, since achondroplastic dwarfs such as Davis are only 1 in 40,000.

However Davis is a lot more active than what people might first think. She has been secretary of the freshman class, vice-president of the sophomore class and a second year member of the yearbook staff. Davis has also been involved in putting together many of the school dances, including being chairperson of the '89 Homecoming Dance, and is an active participant in her leadership class.

Davis feels that the biggest disadvantage of being a dwarf "is the limitation that people automatically think you have." Those who know her know she usually proves them wrong.

Dwarfism is caused by a mutated gene, which means the condition is not inherited unless the gene is carried by

the dwarf. Nine out of ten dwarfs have average sized parents, but as in Davis' family, no other member is affected. Dwarfs prefer to be called dwarfs or little people; the term "midgets" is an unliked slang word which does not apply to them. Under the term little people come the dwarfs whose bodies aren't proportioned; the midgets are small, yet proportionate. To be considered a little person, the person must not be taller than 4'10" in height.

Davis is a member of an organization called the Little People of America, or LPA, that was founded by dwarf actor Billy Barty. She joined when she was 5 years old. Her parents learned of the group through a friend of the family, who, was also a parent of a dwarf.

There are about four members of the LPA in Santa Barbara. They get together at LPA conventions, which are scheduled twice a year regionally and once nationally. There, members talk about experiences resulting from their size, give advice and meet other people with the same condition, thereby creating a fun support group.

Their average size parents can attend doctor seminars which offer the most recent medical information and answer confused parents' questions.

Teens have activities such as dances they can participate in, but the main idea is to meet each other. "I like to meet (other teens) through LPA. We talk about what has happened to us, things we've been called, and we find out that things that happened have happened to others. We learn how to deal with the problems, and to talk about them," Davis stated.

The LPA also has programs that find jobs for members and homes for the large number of infants put up for adoption by their average-sized parents.

There are gadgets that aid little people with their daily lives. Pedal extensions can be connected to allow them to drive, and grippers are used to reach and grab items off high shelves. Most activities only require a stool, or a chair to step on. In Davis' house, the light switch of the bathroom and her bedroom have been lowered to her level and the stools serve as her main aiding object.

Many teenagers would probably find it difficult to imagine life without an occasional ride on a roller coaster. Dwarfs often find themselves unable to get in due to the height line restricting those under the line from riding, mainly for safety reasons.

Davis finds clothes in the teen sections like most people her age. But the effort comes in afterwards since she needs to alter, hem or just roll up the clothing before wearing.

Davis has many options for a future career. Although she doesn't know exactly what she wants as an occupation, she wants to either teach kindergarten or be in business management, possibly for a hotel. There have been cases when little people are discriminated against, but if they fight for a job for which they are qualified, they get the job.

When looking at all the advantages and disadvantages of being a little person, Davis concluded, "It's different...I like it, though."

Sunday July 9 1989

Dwarf-tossing up in Florida

DEAR ANN: Just when you are convinced that human nature has scraped the bottom of the barrel, something worse comes along. Today it is dwarf-tossing.

This so-called sport began in Australia and is now being practiced in several bars in Florida. Patrons place bets on who can toss the dwarf the farthest. The promoters of this latest assault on human dignity have announced that they plan to put dwarf-tossing in 1,000 bars around the country.

These little people have always had a difficult time trying to lead a normal life. They are often viewed as freaks and discriminated against in the job market and school systems. Because dwarfs are undersized, a great many folks believe they have the mentality of children.

Dwarfs have fragile skeletons. A hard toss could cause permanent paralysis or even death. With all the publicity on TV about this new "sport," it is feared that older children will get the notion that it is perfectly OK to pick up dwarf children and throw them around. The possible medical consequences are terrifying.

Some friends with whom I have discussed this atrocity say that they see nothing wrong with this sport since the dwarfs obviously have consented to be tossed and they are paid as much as \$400 a night. "Where else could a dwarf make that kind of money?" was the way it was put.



ANN LANDERS

Considering that the dwarfs agree and, in some instances, compete to be tossed, what is your opinion of this?
— Outraged in Florida

DEAR OUTRAGED: I think it is disgusting. Just because a few dwarfs are willing to be dehumanized and treated as if they were things, not people, does not make it acceptable.

I hope these dwarfs who have agreed to be used as human projectiles will save their money. They may need it. Should they become paralyzed as the result of a toss, they are strictly on their own. They cannot buy insurance and the promoters who hire them are under no obligation to take care of them.

Concerned citizens in Florida have been trying to get a bill passed that would make dwarf-tossing illegal. As this copy goes to press, we have learned that the governor of Florida, Bob Martinez, has signed a bill outlawing this appalling and shameful "sport." Congratulations.

Little People group blasts dwarf-tossing

By Jennifer Brandon
Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Traveling shows featuring dwarf-tossing contests are the latest outrage dwarfs find themselves fighting to preserve their dignity and safety, officials of the Little People of America Inc. said Saturday.

"Dwarf-tossing may help financially the person who does it. ... However, it tears down the structure and the esteem that little people are trying to gain," said association spokesman Ernie Ott.

Florida Gov. Bob Martinez signed a state law last week banning the barroom sport, helping short-statured people fight a lingering perception that they are "non-persons," Angela Van Etten, a member of the Committee to Ban Dwarf-Tossing, said at the association's annual conference.

"It occurs in a bar and a consenting adult little person allows a stranger in the bar to pick him up and see how far he can throw him. The persons in the bar get prize money for throwing him the farthest," Van Etten said.

"The people in the bar ... all stand around laughing and think this is one huge joke," she said.

Dwarf-tossing and dwarf-bowling, in which a helmeted dwarf strapped to a skateboard is used as a human bowling ball, have been made part of traveling entertainment shows and have been reported in South Carolina, North Carolina, New Jersey and New York, Van Etten said. Efforts to outlaw the practice are under way in several states.

The association also issued a statement opposing the use of bone-lengthening surgery to make dwarfed children taller. The association said bungled surgery has crippled patients and forced amputations.

A record 1,000 dwarfed people and their families were expected at

the conference that began Saturday to attend clinics on medical treatments, watch a dwarf fashion show, compete athletically and dance nearly every night of the week.

"During the year, you go dancing with your husband and you're the only little person on the floor. You end up with a jab to the right and a jab to the left," as well as curious stares, said conference co-chairwoman Dee Miller. "So, dancing is very important to us."

Kristen Pohlman, 17, said dwarfs travel across the country to attend the conference because it is their only chance to socialize with others who understand and accept them.

"It's a dream world. It's a real

shock when you get back home," said Pohlman, who believes she is the only dwarf in Panama City, Fla.

"It's hell sometimes. Once a kid in a toy store came up to me and said, 'Oh, you can talk.' She went up to her dad and said, 'Daddy, buy me one of those,'" she said.

The association was founded in 1957 by entertainer Billy Barty, an actor who recently was featured in the movies "Willow" and "Legend." The organization bills itself as the largest national organization representing people of short stature.

Most dwarfism is genetic, but it usually does not strike all members of a family, and it can be caused by more than 100 disorders, Ott said.

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REVIEW

Parents cope with dwarfism of their child

By Anne Pressentin
Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE - When Vicki and John Zielinski learned there might be a growth problem with their first child, a blond-haired, blue-eyed boy, the denial process began immediately.

"There was no problem with my son," was John's reaction when their son's pediatrician first suggested that he might be a dwarf.

■ Love, marriage - C1

"It was real overwhelming," said Vicki, who found herself crying and disappointed with herself. "Wives want to give dads a perfect son."

And for the Gervais, Ore., couple, having the "perfect" child was very important. The Zielinskis raise grass seed, wheat, vegetables and berries on a farm north of Salem, and they expected their new son, Johnny, to help on the farm when he was old enough.

"I had a hard time dealing with it," John said. "In the back of every farmer's mind, you want the boy to take over the farm."

With the news that Johnny was an achondroplastic dwarf, the Zielinskis entered the unknown. Local doctors couldn't tell them what to expect in terms of his future or potential medical difficulties. Pediatricians rarely see dwarf children and, consequently, don't know much about the genetic defect.

Achondroplasia dwarfism is one of more than 200 types of dwarfism identified by specialists in the field, but it is the most common. Of the more than 30,000 dwarves in the United States, 50 percent to 70 percent have achondroplasia, according to Charles Scott, director of the department of genetics at the Alfred I. du Pont Institute, Wilmington, Del.

Achondroplasia is typically associated with short limbs, a large head, a flat nasal bridge and a small spinal cavity. Medical problems are common in achondroplasts because frequently their torsos, muscles and heads are the same size as those of people of average height. Because of this, there is a tendency for legs to bow and spines to curve.

One common problem is a chronic ear infection during the first five to eight years of life, because the tube from the middle ear to the throat doesn't drain. Left untreated, the infections can result in hearing loss. Other problems include speech impairments, weight problems and looseness of the joints.

Johnny Zielinski is now 6 years old and has just finished the first grade. His parents often take him places in a stroller because of his short legs. Because of the stroller and his size, passers-by often mistake him for a child of 3.

Johnny is expected to take over his father's farm someday. He has already helped drive the combine — with a little help. He also plays on the neighborhood tee-ball team, which his father coaches.

Both parents are proud of Johnny, who is nicknamed "Big." But they admit acceptance of his short stature didn't come quickly or easily.

Vicki came to grips with Johnny's situation within the first two years of his life, but it has only been since 1988, when Johnny was 5 years old, that John truly accepted his

Please see **FAMILIES: A7**

CONTINUED: FROM A1

Families

son.

The Zielinskis are attending the Little People of America annual conference this week at The Coeur d'Alene Resort so that Johnny can be around other short-statured people.

"Acceptance came, finally," said John, who took time away from his farm during the busiest time of the year to attend the convention.

The Zielinskis' reaction and process of acceptance of their dwarf child is a typical one, according to Steven Kopits, director of the International Center for Skeletal Dysplasia in Towson, Md.

"Acceptance is a gradual thing," he said. "As a mother ... all of a sudden, boom, all your dreams are blown to pieces, your husband turns away like a stranger."

Kopits has treated more than 2,000 patients with bone disorders, 50 percent of whom are achondroplasts.

Kopits has many stories of husbands forcing their wives to choose between them and the dwarf child.

"It's the maximum challenge for people to overstep their own boundaries," he said.

Kopits tells of one young family whose first child was born with a mild case of achondroplasia. After the father forced his wife to make a choice, she put the child up for

adoption rather than lose her husband.

In many countries, dwarves are hidden in back rooms or subjected to excruciating procedures to lengthen their limbs. The process sometimes leaves the patient with less mobility than before. But in the culturally diverse United States there is relative tolerance, Kopits said.

Families attending this week's conference are those who are already over the grieving process.

"The geneticist said, 'You have to grieve for your child,'" said Betty Jacobsen, Longview, Wash., about the emotional process of acceptance. "I was given permission to be sad."

Betty and Rob Jacobsen's son, Adam, is now 3 years old and also was diagnosed with achondroplasia.

In the Jacobsen's case, Rob was the one to first calm down and accept the situation.

"I think I was a little more accepting because I didn't go through the pregnancy," Rob said. "The perfect baby wasn't born, but at the same time you have a baby who needs all the love and bonding."

Now Betty is giving speeches on dwarfism and already is talking to the grade school Adam will attend to make sure small chairs and tables will be available for his use.

"Height doesn't make the man. The individual makes the man," John Zielinski said as he watched Johnny run off with a soda pop can in hand. "He can do anything in the world."



Staff photo by Jesse Tinsley

Vicki and John Zielinski gradually came to accept that 6-year-old Johnny is an achondroplastic dwarf. "Height doesn't make the man," says the boy's father.

Looking for love

*Convention gives little people
chance to meet and fall in love*

By Rebecca Nappi
Staff writer

Leroy Bankowski walked into the crowded lobby of the hotel where the national Little People of America convention was being held. He saw the woman he'd met six months before at a workshop, but he'd been too shy to get to know her better. The woman's name was Donna and she'd been shy, too, but at the convention they overcame their shyness. They danced and dined and took long walks alone. They talked their hearts out. A year later, they married.

Donna and Leroy Bankowski of Coeur d'Alene are dwarfs or "people of short stature" as members of the Little People of America organization prefer to be called. Donna and Leroy met exactly 17 years ago at an LPA convention in Oakland. This year they are two of the organizers of the 1990 national LPA convention which continues through Friday at The Coeur d'Alene Resort.

The Bankowskis are too busy this week to celebrate the anniversary of their romantic meeting at that convention long ago, but they recognize romance in the eyes of some dwarf couples who have paired up this week.

"This would be a perfect place to fall in love," Leroy said, as he looked out toward Lake Coeur d'Alene and the mountains surrounding it.

About 550 short-statured people — men and women who for medical reasons are 4 feet 10 inches or under — and their families have come from throughout the country to spend the week attending workshops and medical clinics and meetings on serious topics important to dwarfs.

But the convention's social events are important, too, especially for those short-statured people who are single. The convention provides singles a unique opportunity to meet other dwarfs to date, to fall in love with, to marry. The Bankowskis know about 300 other dwarf couples who met at conventions and later married.

"We are people just like everyone else," said Jude Cormier, a 39-year-old single Spokane woman of short stature. "We have the same hopes to marry and to have children. Just because we look different doesn't mean we don't have the same desires."

Please see **LITTLE PEOPLE: C5**

CONTINUED: FROM C1

Little people

The teenagers are looking cool. They are hanging out in the lobby of the resort talking with their friends. The girls have new perms and new outfits and they stand together in groups and giggle. They steal glances at the boys, who continue to act ultra-cool.

The parents of the teenagers are attending workshops on topics such as "Vocational Rehabilitation" and "Extended Limb Lengthening." The younger brothers and sisters of the teenagers are painting, coloring, watching puppet shows. But the teens know exactly where they want to be. Hanging out. Scoping out the boys, scoping out the girls.

"It's like being in a dream," said Tara Mills of Napa, Calif.

Mills, Ericka Peasley and Heather Davis are all 17 and from California. They are in charge of teen activities at the convention. They've planned a pool-side pizza party and a boat trip around the lake. In years past, adults organized workshops for the teens on topics such as dating, peer pressure, drug and alcohol abuse. But the teens clammed up. This year, the adults put teens in charge of their own events.

"We want to talk about those things, but we don't want to do it in a structured setting," Peasley said.

High school years can be painful for dwarfs, when "fitting in" is all important. There are only about 35,000 dwarfs of all ages in the United States, and that means that some teen dwarfs are the only ones in their high schools.

"We wait for this convention all year long," Davis said.

The girls spent the month before the convention preparing. They bought tons of clothes, a new outfit for each day. The social highlight of the week will be tonight's banquet. The girls will wear formals, the boys suits or tuxedos.

There has been a dance every night of the convention, and the girls have felt no inhibitions asking the guys to dance. But for the banquet, it's a different story. The girls don't feel right asking the guys for a date.

"It's too forward," Davis said.

If the girls don't get dates, they'll sit with each other at a table and chat with the guys who either lacked the courage or the will to ask a girl to the banquet. Dates or no dates, they'll bask in the good feeling that comes with partying and dancing with people their own size.

"Here we've already broken through the barrier of being short," Peasley said. "We're all equals."

Carol Pederson is 5 feet 5 inches tall. Her husband, Erik, is 4 feet 4 inches. Carol and Erik met at Western Washington University eight years ago. They began to date. Students stared at them as they held hands. Clerks in grocery stores automatically gave Carol the change, assuming that she was Erik's caretaker.

A fellow student, a chemistry major, once asked Carol: "Could you and Erik have children if you got married?" When Carol said yes, the student said: "I didn't think people of two different species could reproduce."

Carol and Erik have been married almost four years. They are professionals, living in Seattle. Carol has adapted to the stares and the stupid remarks from the "outside" world, but she's still surprised at the prejudice she sometimes encounters at LPA conventions because she's of average size and Erik is short-statured. They are considered a "mixed marriage" couple.

"Some people are very accepting, but others look down on it," Carol said. "They'll forget I'm there and start gossiping that 'So and So is dating an average-sized person and that's not good.' I think some of the women feel that Erik summarily rejected all of them for a tall woman."

Maurie Heald, a short-statured man from Seattle, has been married three times — twice to average-sized women. His present wife is a dwarf, and he said, "This one is the best. The only problem is no one can reach the top shelf."

He said short-statured people share a common denominator — their size — and that can make their relationships less complicated, similar to couples who share the same religion.

He said some dwarfs wonder about the motivations of average-sized men and women who date dwarfs.

"Are they out with you because they feel sorry for you? Or because you're a curiosity?"

LPA members do not keep the mixed marriage topic in a closet. Carol and Erik, for instance, led a workshop titled "Mixed Marriages."

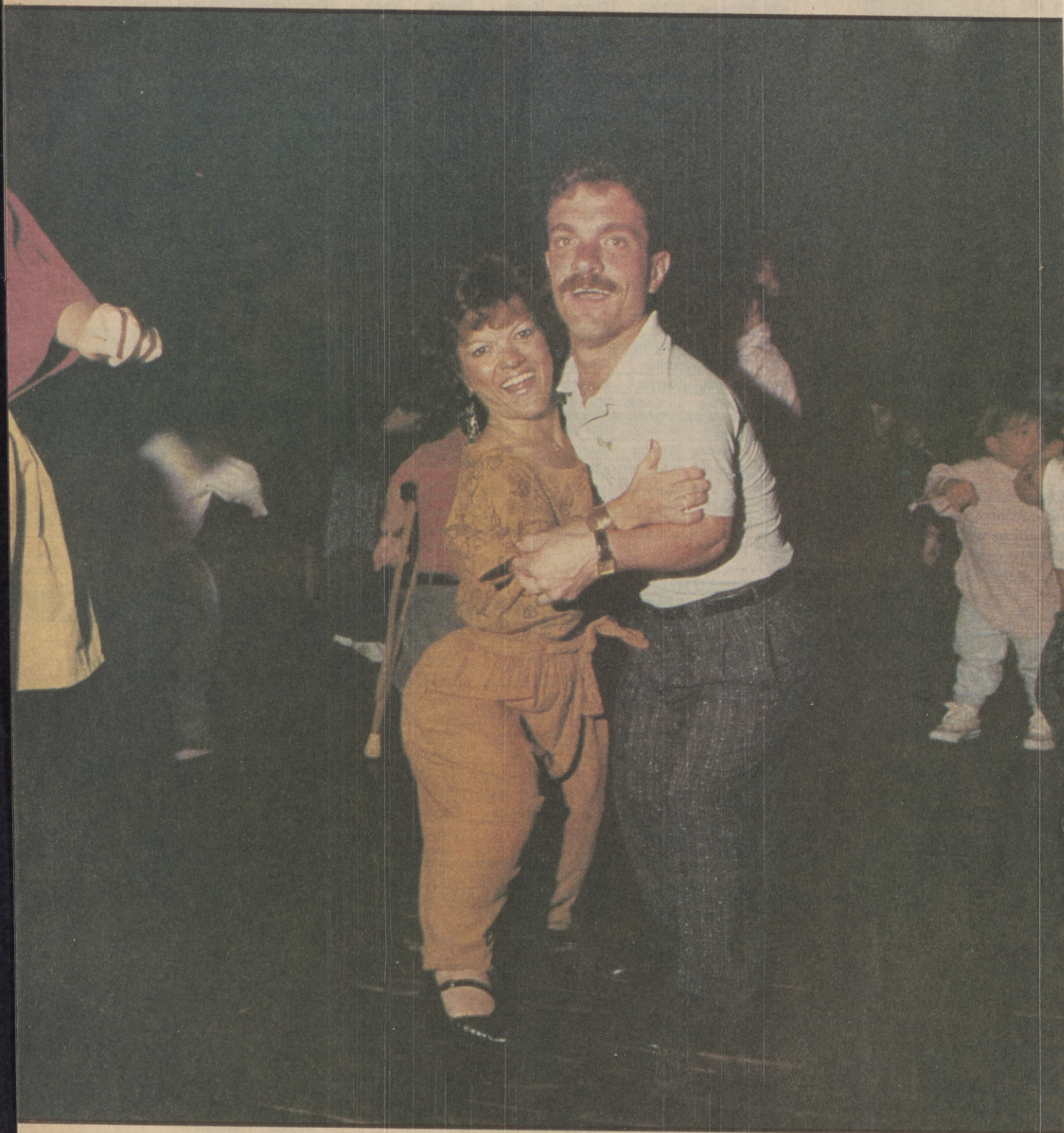
They told people their story. How they met and fell in love and decided to spend the rest of their lives together. They would be lying if they said that there were no problems because he is short-statured and she is not. But they love each other. And that's the most important thing of all. That's something every person — short or tall — can understand.



"Mixed marriage" couple Erik and Carol Pederson of Seattle walk along the boardwalk at The Coeur d'Alene Resort.



Friends Annette LaMothe of Vienna, Va., and Joe Simanton of Placentia, Calif., take time out from dancing to talk.



s Louise Yankofsky and Rudy Puccella take their turn on the floor during Monday night's dance.

Staff photo

Thurs. July 12, 1990

Awarding dwarfs a measure of dignity

JUST WHEN I think dwarf-tossing is no longer a social issue, it pops up again, arousing strong feelings among do-gooders, bleeding hearts and other sensitive souls.

Not only dwarf-tossing, a competitive pastime that began in Australia, but a variation known as dwarf-bowling.

The latest development is a law passed by the New York legislature, banning the tossing or bowling of dwarfs.

Gov. Mario Cuomo, while admitting that he knows little about the practice, since he has never felt the urge to toss or bowl a dwarf, says he will probably sign the bill into law.

"These are human beings," he said. "This disturbs me. I don't know why."

Ah, that's the hook in the move to ban dwarf-tossing. As Cuomo said of his discomfort, "I don't know why."

I share Cuomo's feelings. I have never tossed a dwarf, seen one tossed, and if given the opportunity to toss one, I would decline. Nor have I ever bowled a dwarf. (In dwarf-bowling, incidentally, they are strapped to something like a skateboard and hurled toward bowling pins.)

And like most of those who oppose the tossing and bowling of dwarfs, I have contempt for those who engage in this practice. I suspect most dwarf-tossers-bowlers are men who have tattoos, hairlines that begin at their eyes, breathe through their mouths and make slobbering noises when they eat. In other words, they ain't got a lot of couth.

Yet, I must disagree with the New York legislature and Cuomo. While their hearts might be in the right place, government has no business



MIKE ROYKO

meddling in the rights of a consenting adult dwarf to be tossed or bowled.

The key word is "consenting." It would be a different matter if a dwarf or any other small person were snatched up against his will and flung through the air. Anyone who did such a thing to a dwarf should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

But I have followed this issue closely. And to the best of my knowledge, only consenting adult dwarfs have been tossed or bowled. And they've done so for profit. One often-tossed dwarf claimed to be making \$2,000 a week entertaining weak-minded tavern oafs.

So how can society say that a small person who chooses to earn a handsome living being tossed is doing something illegal? Especially when proper safety measures are taken?

Every autumn weekend, millions of Americans stare at their TV sets, watching 290-pound men leap upon 180-pound men. They see these men being carried off on stretchers, bones bro-

ken, ligaments and tendons popped. And the millions cheer because it is football, and all the mayhem is acceptable. In fact, to many it is delightful.

So if we allow Big Bubba to slam-dunk Little Tyrone against a thin layer of AstroTurf, how can we say that it is offensive for some tavern lout to toss a well-padded dwarf 15 feet onto a soft mattress?

The answer, say the do-gooders, is dignity. To toss one dwarf is to demean all dwarfs, midgets and other little people.

IF DIGNITY is the issue, then politicians are the last people in our society who should be offended. To gain public office, they hire professional lie consultants; they stuff their mouths with ethnic foods and pop foolish hats on their heads for photo opportunities.

So what is less dignified? Being tossed a few feet onto a mattress or letting someone photograph you while you are chomping a Polish pierogi, and saying, "If elected, I will ban the practice of dwarf-tossing?"

To ban dwarf-tossing is an even greater insult to dwarfs than to toss them. It is saying: "Because you are a dwarf, you cannot think for yourself and determine the destiny (and destination) of your own body."

I rest my case.

Now, what do you think about midget-juggling?

MIKE ROYKO writes for the Chicago Tribune. His column appears Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in Scene.

The babies at this convention steal the show. When their mothers and fathers push them in their strollers, convention goers stop to peek and make little baby noises at them. The toddlers come with parents to receptions and soon become the center of attention.

Everyone loves the babies, but for dwarf couples the decision to have a child is not an easy one. There are more than 200 different types of dwarfism, and not all have a genetic cause. Dwarfs can be born to average-sized parents with no family history of dwarfism.

But the most common type of dwarfism — achondroplasia — is easily passed through generations. A husband and wife with achondroplasia have a 75 percent chance of producing a dwarf child.

The Bankowskis' two children — 13-year-old Leann and 8-year-old Zachary — are dwarfs, and Donna knows her children will endure teasing and ridicule, but she said it's easier to be a dwarf now than in the past because of organizations like LPA.

"When our kids go to school, they don't get ridiculed like we did. When Leann first went to school, a kid called her a midget (that's considered an insulting term) and she went right to the principal and said, 'This kid called me a midget!'"

Carol and Erik Pederson have a 50 percent chance of having a dwarf baby. They are discussing whether to try for their own child or adopt a short-statured child, an option many couples choose. Erik was sickly as a child because of complications from his dwarfism.

"I wouldn't want to put another child through what I went through," Erik said. "But I think I'd be a good parent for a little person."

Babies and marriage are the last thing on the mind of 38-year-old Daniel Margulies. Margulies is single, handsome, smart. He's the immediate past president of the LPA, an engineer, a San Francisco Bay Area resident. And he's popular at this convention. Women send him notes and bottles of wine. Because he doesn't want to hurt anyone's feelings, he said he probably won't take a date to tonight's banquet.

Margulies did not date until he was 20 years old. He was too fearful of rejection to ask average-sized women out, and he did not know many short-statured women. The conventions have opened a new life to Margulies — a life of dating and being popular, a life of deep commitment to a world outside of himself. He's active in the LPA Foundation which helps dwarfs get scholarships and job training.

"People ask me, 'Why aren't you married?' I tell them, 'I'm having too good of a time!'"

NATIONAL DIGEST

N.Y. bans dwarf tossing

ALBANY, N.Y. — Gov. Mario Cuomo signed legislation Tuesday banning dwarf tossing and dwarf bowling in New York bars, calling the activities a "strange diversion."

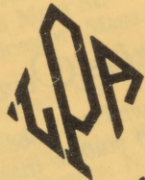
"Any activity which dehumanizes and humiliates these people is degrading to us all," Cuomo said.

The bill amounts to a ban because the events have not been popular outside bars. It passed the Legislature with only one dissenting vote.

The law targets taverns, which could lose their liquor licenses.

Dwarf tossing is a competition in which people pick up dwarfs, who are wearing harnesses, and heave them as far as possible at a padded target. It produced an offshoot, dwarf bowling, in which a helmeted dwarf is strapped to a skateboard and rolled into bowling pins.

*Little People
of
America, Inc.*



Think Big

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What is LPA?

A nation-wide, voluntary organization Little People of America, Inc. (LPA) provides fellowship, an interchange of ideas, solutions to the problems unique to a little person, and moral support. This is done through an annual national convention; district and local chapter meetings or informal area gatherings.

Who Comprise Our Members?

They are people who for medical reasons are considerably smaller in stature than most.

They are accountants, artists, clerks, educators, administrators, factory technicians, secretaries, students, draftsmen, engineers, TV repairmen, bankers, construction workers, and writers—actually almost every occupation imaginable.

Your opportunity to meet some of these people will be at the next national convention, or district or local meeting near you.

How did LPA Begin?

In 1957, TV and movie personality Billy Barty organized a group of 20 little people at Reno, Nevada. In 1960, over 100 attended a national convention at which a constitution was adopted, the U.S. was divided into districts, and the groundwork was laid for incorporation of the non-profit organization—the Little People of America, Inc.

Just A Thought....

A small person can live in two worlds — a small world and a normal world. A person who finds happiness in both worlds has nothing to lose to society or himself. But a person who hides in one of the two worlds must always live with the fear of evasion or contact with the other world. For this person, there is no real truth — not even to himself.

How Can You Serve?

There are many ways you can serve. Most important, by example, you can offer encouragement and moral support to others. **YOU** may have that much-needed information that another LPAer seeks. You may be able to meet other little people in your area, and organize a local group.

It is often difficult for some of us to meet other little people for the first time. We are used to living in the "big world" and often do not wish to admit to ourselves that we are different from other people in our physical stature. But regardless of this feeling, the same problems are present with each of us, and meeting others with those problems opens a new world of answers, understanding and wisdom, friendship and enjoyment.

What About The Children?

The "Little Littles" or the children, whether they have normal or small parents, are of great concern to us. Because they gain as much or more than their elders from contact with other small children, they have their own programs and activities.

LPA has also formed the PARENTS' AUXILIARY, on the local, district and national levels. At their meetings, parents are able to ask questions and, oftentimes, find solutions to their questions.

How About The Teenagers?

LPA leaders realize the potential of the teen members. In order to cultivate this, a special program has been developed that parallels the regular activities.

The teens have their own national chairman, newsletter and newsletter editor. Through an exchange of ideas, they keep up-to-date on the latest news, LPA fashions, and "teen talk."

How is LPA Operated?

The United States is divided into 12 districts, with the members in each district electing their own directors. National officers are elected bi-annually at the national convention, and together with the District Directors, form the organization's governing body, the Board of Directors.

Finances are obtained from membership dues, donations by "friends" of LPA and through advertisements in the national newsletter. The annual dues are:

Per Person: \$7.50

Per Family: \$10.00

Per Teen and Little Little: \$5.00

LPA Publications

The national newsletter, LPA NEWS, is published 10 times annually, filled with pictures of other meetings, news, the latest professional and medical information, comments by the national officers, and occasional bits of humor.

District and chapter newsletters keep the members up-to-date on all of the latest area events.

The Member's Handbook is filled with countless numbers of ideas and suggestions, on everything from handy gadgets for more convenient living, to tips on buying clothes and methods of getting that "just-right" job.

LPA Foundation

Little People of America, Inc., Foundation was established in 1968 for the purpose of being able to gather and disburse funds in the following areas: Vocational Training of Little People; Medical and Scientific Research in causes and possible treatment of dwarfism; and in assisting agencies in the placement of Little People for adoption.

The LPA Foundation is governed by the elected officers of LPA, Inc., thus giving a continuing continuity between Little People of America, Inc., and its Foundation.

'Little people' get their say

JENNIFER MEARS

Associated Press Writer

DENVER — It's not often that the "little people" get to be heard, let alone challenge others to meet them eye-to-eye on issues that affect them most.

This week is a little different.

"This is one week we can stand, like you do, face-to-face. We don't have to look at any belt buckles or kneecaps," said Jan Felker, who organized The Little People of America's 36th annual conference.

Dwarves, or little people as they prefer to be called, still alter their clothes to size, put extensions on the pedals of their cars and find it repugnant when people of average size treat them like children or playthings.

In a world a few sizes too big, they squirm when referred to by the derogatory term "midgets."

But the 1,100 conventioners gathering here will learn how others deal with those prejudices, and also discuss topics such as parenting and the medical disorders that make them unique.

"It's focusing on real issues that affect people with disabilities — little

people. It's focusing on sort of non-social issues like access and employment discrimination," said Paul Miller, commissioner of the U.S. Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission.

"Now, I think, the organization is maturing and really finding an identity that includes both social and other issues," Miller said.

Erica Peasley, who attended her first convention eight years ago, said she has made lifelong friendships and learned nothing is really out of reach.

"I'm not going to say it was easy. It's never been easy," said Peasley, 22, who stands about 4 feet and plans to attend medical school. "But it's who I am, and I like who I am."

People are considered dwarves if their height is markedly below the average for their age. Usually, restricted growth is due to heredity factors. In uncommon cases, short stature is the result of a specific growth disorder.

As little people become more comfortable with themselves, said J.J. Ingalls of Firestone, Colo., they have been able to gain acceptance among their taller peers. "Forty years ago, the thought of little people was associated

with circuses and sideshows," said Ingalls, who stands 4-foot-4.

Nowadays, the little people are standing up for themselves.

In recent years, they have publicly voiced their outrage over dwarf-tossing, a bar sport believed to have originated in England and popularized in Australia before it sought to gain a foothold in this country. The game has contestants competing to see who can toss a dwarf the farthest.

The convention's signature T-shirt proclaims: "Meet Friends in High Places," evidence of the LPA's diverse membership that includes doctors, lawyers and teachers. Some people proudly sport T-shirts with "Real Live Dwarf" emblazoned across the chest.

One of the littlest Little People is 8-year-old Josh Maudlin, who like most dwarf children is the only such person in his family.

For him, the convention is a chance "to make fun of tall people."

"The convention made me think there's more dwarves than I thought," he said, then turned to a reporter and added, "Don't you feel different here?"

Little People gathering for district convention

More than 100 Little People of America are expected to attend a district convention this weekend at the Holiday Inn on Sisk Road in Modesto.

They will represent District 12, covering California, Nevada and Nevada, according to Marilyn Artran of Simi Valley, the organization's treasurer. Artran's husband, Evan, is the district director.

This will be the first meeting of the group in Modesto in several years. A good portion of the time will be spent planning next summer's national convention, which will be held in San Francisco. The 1991 convention was held in Texas.

There also will be social and educational activities. "We're just like one big family," said Marilyn Artran. "We're a very functional support group, not a lonely hearts club."

"We're trying to educate the public that we do exist, while providing activities for young people. We have lawyers, doc-

tors, judges, teachers, computer operators and printers in our group. We're just like everyone else, only shorter."

Members will start arriving on Friday afternoon for registration and hospitality. Saturday's activities will include a business meeting at 9 a.m. and workshops until noon. After lunch, there will be a Kids on the Block puppet show at 1:30 p.m. A dinner/dance will be held Saturday night, starting with a social hour at 6:30 p.m. Dinner will be at 7:30 p.m. and the dance will follow at 9 p.m. A membership meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Sunday.

The Little People of America, with a national membership of about 5,000, was founded in 1957 by entertainer Billy Barty. It is open to adults under 4-feet-10. There are chapters in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego.

For more information about this weekend's convention, call Artran at (805) 583-3175 or (818) 349-7393.

The Modesto Bee

Region B-2
On The Record B-4
State B-5

Metro

•• Sunday, October 13, 1991

B
Section

Raising level of awareness a tall order for little people

By ALVIE LINDSAY
Bee staff writer

For Heather Davis, the worst thing is all those people patting her on the head and saying, "Oh, you're soooooo cute."

For Ericka Peasley, the toughest thing is the daily struggle to be independent.

For Evan Artran, the most important thing is educating people.

Davis, Peasley and Artran are dwarfs — little people.

They — and about 100 others — are in Modesto this weekend for the Little People of America District 12 convention at the Holiday Inn.

Little People of America, with a nationwide membership of 5,000, is a national organization founded in 1957 by entertainer Billy Barty. District 12 includes California, Nevada and Hawaii.

District members gather twice a year to socialize, attend educational workshops and discuss their common bond.

"People don't treat you your own age," said Davis, an 18-year-old from Tacoma, Wash. "They pat you on your head and say you're cute. I hate that."

"I know what you mean," said Tara Mills of Napa.

Davis, Mills and Peasley, who is from Oakdale, met through the organization and have remained close friends.

"It is a great opportunity to meet people," Peasley said. "And it gives you an opportunity to talk about things."

Peasley, who graduated from Oakdale High School, is in her first semester at the University of Redlands.

"I decided to go to Redlands because I wanted to get away from home; I wanted to be more independent," she said. "But it's not easy. I have to depend on people at school, and that's frustrating."

For example, when Peasley wants to go to the campus dining hall, she has to take a friend: the trays are too high for her to reach.

But that's just one of what Davis calls "the little things" that little people struggle with on a daily basis.

"Like a pay phone," she said. "It's hard because the coin slot is so high."

Artran says educating the public about those "little things" — and dwarfism, in general — is one of the most important functions of Little People.

"We want people to understand us," said Artran, who is the district director. "We want people to know we're like everyone else, only shorter."

Artran's wife, Marilyn, recalled a recent all-too-familiar incident in a grocery

LITTLE PEOPLE: Convention aims to educate others

CONTINUED from B-1

store.

A young girl noticed her and told her mom, "Look, look." The mom, embarrassed, told the girl to stop and quickly whisked her away.

"I expect children to be curious and ask questions," Marilyn said. "I would rather people ask questions than ignore me — pretend I'm not there."

One of the goals of Little People is to make sure that dwarfs and their concerns are not ignored.

"We are a social organization," Evan Artran said, "but we are also here to educate — not only the public, but (legislators), also."

Three workshops sessions were held Saturday morning as part of the convention, which continues today. One of those featured Edward Chandler, who is with the Office of the State Architect. He spoke about the latest laws to prevent architectural barriers in public and private buildings.

In addition, workshops were held on introducing yourself to other little people and a workshop for parents of children who are dwarfs.

See Page B-2, LITTLE PEOPLE

Cause of dwarfism located

One form linked to genetic defect

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Researchers have located the genetic defect responsible for a form of dwarfism that affects 1 in 20,000 people.

Scientists at the University of California, Irvine, found the gene that causes achondroplasia just six weeks after they began looking for it. Three other teams had narrowed the search to the end of human chromosome No. 4.

"It's a lot of luck, but also the fact we'd laid a huge amount of groundwork," Dr. John Wasmuth, a professor of biological chemistry at the university's College of Medicine, said Thursday.

The results appear in today's issue of the journal *Cell*.

Wasmuth and his team had examined the gene, called FGFR3, for several years as the suspected site of a defect that causes Huntington's disease, a neurological disorder. They found no link. They returned to look for a link to dwarfism after the other researchers suggested the same region of chromosome harbored the achondroplasia gene.

"It's spectacular that he pulled this off in record time," Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Center for Human Genome Research in Bethesda, Md., said in a telephone interview. "This is a good two years ahead of when anybody would have guessed the actual gene and its mutations would emerge."

The defective gene contains a tiny bit of incorrect information that Wasmuth likened to "chang-



Associated Press

Alexander Schafnitz, 4, walks through a briefing Thursday on the discovery of the genetic defect that causes a form of dwarfism.

ing one letter in a word in a paragraph." The defect affects bone growth. It produces a normal-sized trunk and shortened limbs, and accounts for about a third of all dwarfism, Wasmuth said.

A parent with the disorder has a 50 percent chance of passing a single defective gene to a child, who may develop spinal and joint problems.

When both parents have it, the child has a 25 percent chance of inheriting two copies of the flawed gene, which "invariably results in a stillbirth or a child dying one or two days after birth," Wasmuth said.

Wasmuth said his team developed "a simple, rapid, almost 100 percent accurate" DNA test to determine if a fetus has the defective gene.

Some dwarf support groups objected to the idea of screening fetuses. Wasmuth said "the only use of this test should be to check pregnancies at risk for having two copies of the gene."

Wasmuth said the defect on

FGFR3 was present in 16 cases he examined for the published study.

"Since then, we've done a total of 70, and 68 of 70 have exactly the same change," Wasmuth said.

Think big, says 3-foot-9 actor Billy Barty

By **STUART GORDON**

Bee staff writer

Film and stage entertainer Billy Barty has made a big film career out of his small stature.

On Friday, the 3-foot, 9-inch actor made a giant impression on Modesto Junior College students and staff as he discussed his career and his efforts to overcome stereotypes about dwarfism.

"I have a saying," Barty told the audience. "People with a disability don't want a handout; they want a hand up. We do not want to be apart from society; we want to be a part of society."

Barty, whose career in film and vaudeville began in the 1920s at age 3, met with about 35 people during his brief campus visit. Many of those he met had physical or mental disabilities.

People with disabilities shouldn't allow their limitations to keep them from striving to fulfill their dreams, Barty urged.

"My father, who was about 6 feet tall, was a positive thinker. He never told me I couldn't do something because I was too small," said the 70-year-old entertainer.

"The only space barrier you have to conquer is the one between your ears," he told little people in the audience.

While attending college in Los Angeles, Barty noted that he defied the odds by playing football, baseball and basketball. That brought a gasp from some of the

MJC football players standing toward the back of the room.

"I played halfback behind an end that was 6-foot-4 and 240 pounds," Barty said. "The coach built seven plays around me. I was fast, and I didn't make much of a target."

Barty has been in dozens of movies, playing both comedic and dramatic roles. He hosted a Los Angeles children's program for four years. He lamented that Hollywood always has balked at giving him parts that highlighted his acting skills rather than his size.

His many film credits include "Willow" and "Under The Rainbow." Television fans will likely recall his role as Babby, the pool shark in the series "Peter Gunn."

Despite his film accomplishments, Barty is most proud of his efforts to address the medical, social, psychological and vocational problems faced by the estimated 1.5 million "little people" like himself in America.

Barty founded the nonprofit organizations Little People of America and the Billy Barty Foundation in 1957.

To MJC student Philly Rangel and her 8-year-old son, Curtis, the diminutive actor seemed larger than life. Rangel is one of more than 570 students with disabilities enrolled at MJC.

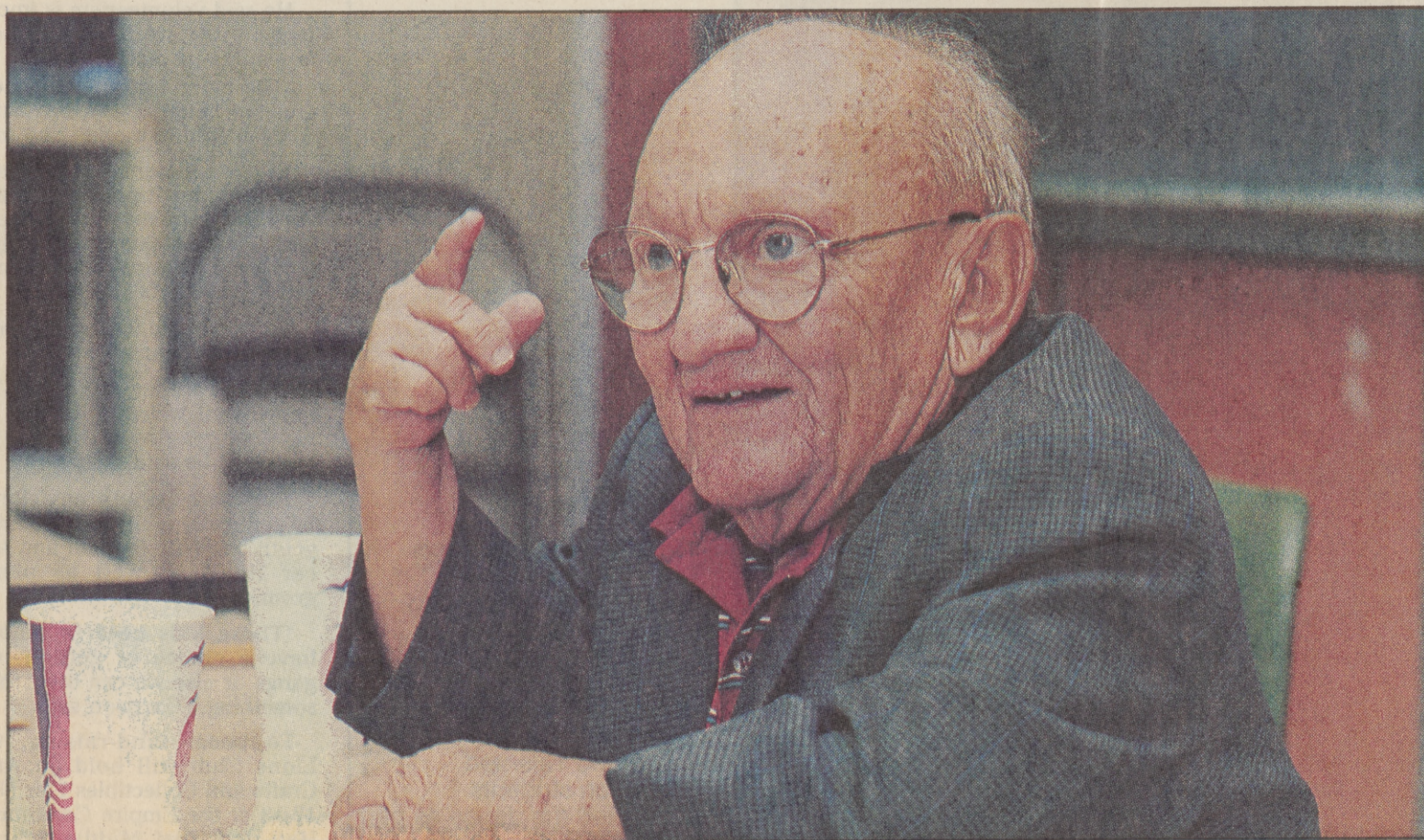
"I took my son out of school to see him. My son watches him in



See Page B-2, **BARTY**

Barty and a new fan, Curtis Rangel, 8, of Turlock

'People with a disability don't want to be apart from society; we want to be a part of society.' — **Billy Barty**



Ted Benson/The Bee

Film and stage veteran Billy Barty at MJC: "We don't want a handout, but a hand up," he tells disabilities class.

BARTY: Actor works to get past stereotypes

CONTINUED from B-1

'Willow' over and over again. He's very excited to see him," said Rangel. Both she and her son have dwarfism.

"I wanted my son to see someone who is a little person who has accomplished so much," said Rangel, who is studying to become a special education teacher.

Ruth Washington, who is a member of Little People of America, was equally thrilled to see Barty.

"I think the message he wants to get across to people is the fact that short-statured people have a right to live as normal a life as they possibly can," said Washington, who is taking MJC courses to obtain her high school

equivalency diploma.

"Billy is an inspiration to people who are short-statured because they see that if a person like Billy can succeed, they also can accomplish what they set out to do."

Barty also spoke to members of the Stanislaus Dental Society Thursday night about his foundation.



Christine Peterson is majoring in special education at Illinois State University in Bloomington.

A sizable problem

Fitting into a normal-size world is daunting for dwarfs

By Ruth Bohan

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

In this age of political correctness, many people have figured out how to be civil to those who are different from them. But one group says it still suffers through public finger-pointing and outright mean and thoughtless comments: the little people, dwarfs.

Imagine being asked on your first job interview, college degree in hand: What you are doing in this office. Shouldn't you be in a circus or sideshow?

It happened to Lois Dolinajec of Arlington Heights, and she said it took her a long time to muster enough courage to try for another job.

And what about Jackie McGarrahan of Winthrop Harbor? She overheard a parent admonishing a whining child and pointing her finger: "Just be glad you're not like her."

In a rare moment of despondency, Christine



Tribune photo by Stan Policht

Bill and Judy Gootjes have scaled down some of the rooms in their ranch house for their 13-year-old daughter Aimee.

Peterson of Libertyville, an 18-year-old, wrote in a school paper that she couldn't go to a mall or supermarket without being the object of "some type of rude comment or even hysterical fits of laughter."

Such troubles are piled on top of trying to adjust to a "normal" world—public phones at the wrong level, bus steps too high to climb, food impossible to reach on grocery shelves. Fortunately, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 has brought changes that benefit those with short stature.

Yet many of these people make up for what they don't have in size by having plenty of pluck. They are upfront and upbeat, eager to dispel the image of the exaggerated tinny-voiced Munchkins from "The Wizard of Oz."

They've learned how to disregard the insults and have found friends and fulfilling jobs.

Charlie McGarrahan, 64, is grateful that his father always told him he could do anything he wanted with his life. Semi-retired now, he has owned a cleaning and laundry plant and is now

One viewpoint

As a student at Libertyville High School, Christine Peterson wrote about her experiences.

"O, America the beautiful, the land of the prejudiced and the ignorant. Although America is known as the 'melting pot' of the world, the fact of the matter is that it is far from it. In reality, it is more like a layered salad compared to a tossed

SEE VIEWPOINT, PAGE 6

working for an office-equipment company.

His early years in grade school were the most painful.

"When I was younger, I didn't notice that I was shorter than anybody else until I was in 3rd grade," he said. "One of the girls in my class who was small

SEE DWARF, PAGE 6

Dwarf

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

came up and said, 'I'm taller than you are, Chuck.' That really smarted.

"I don't remember too much of the younger years, because they were so painful. I tried to forget all that."

Through the years, he found the most effective weapon was humor. "I found I can be funny. If they made a joke about my height, I'd crack one right back," he said.

Wife Jackie, 62 and retired, credits supportive parents for her ability to persevere and become a popular and successful teacher in Zion and Gurnee.

Said Robert Fink of Winthrop Harbor, who was her principal at Shiloh Elementary School in Zion for nine years: "I think the thing that helped Jackie the most was that she stayed at one school for a long time and everyone became accustomed to her. The kids adjusted to her, and that made it easier for her. I even had quite a few parents who asked to have their children in her classes."

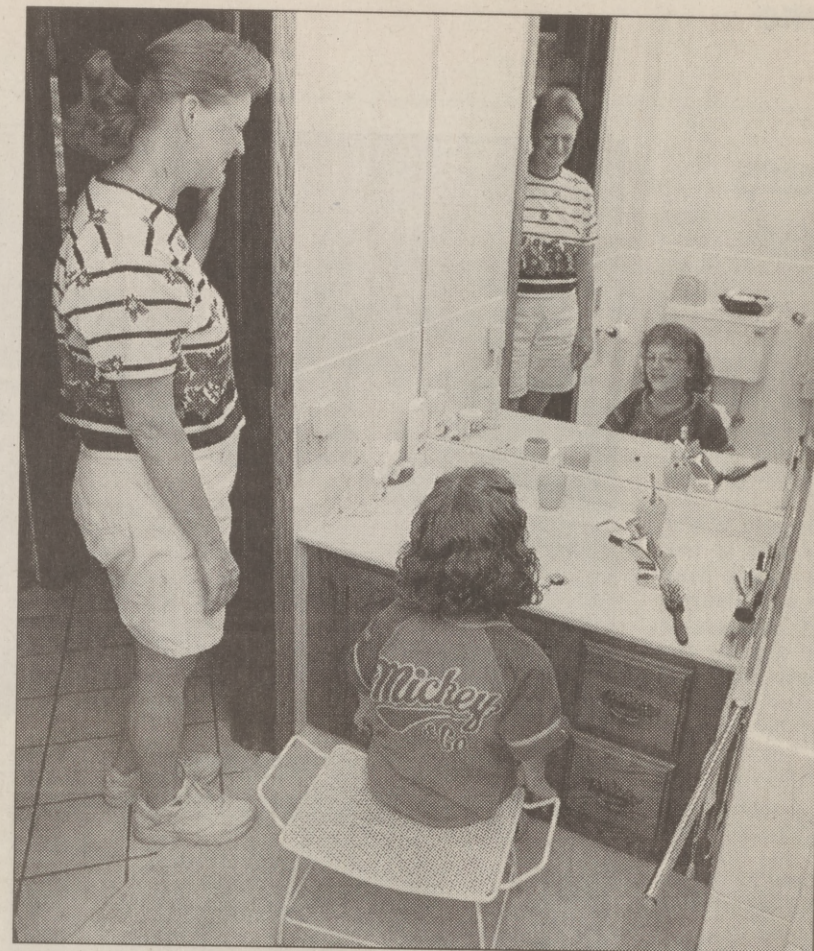
The McGarrahan met through the Little People of America, founded in 1957 by Billy Barty, a dwarf actor. The 5,000-member national organization, based in Washington, D.C., is the largest in the world devoted to people of short stature.

Dolinajec has been a leader of Little People for several years, having served as district director for the Illinois-Wisconsin area for six years until 1993. Dolinajec says the majority of the members of the group are dwarfs, while only 15 to 20 percent are midgets. (A dwarf has a normal-size torso but limbs that are smaller in proportion, while a midget is properly proportioned for the individual's size.)

The organization offers guidance to teens, parents of dwarf children and young adults. It also offers educational scholarships, medical assistance, volunteer services by physicians who can assist local doctors who may be seeing a dwarf patient for the first time, employment services and social activities. It even acts as an informal dating service.

Although the group serves all people of small stature, many members do not like being labeled as midgets.

Dolinajec said that dwarfs look at the word midget as a putdown, usually applied to people in a derogatory manner. To them,



Aimee Gootjes, with mom Judy, has a customized bathroom in her Riverwoods home.

Tribune photo by Bob Langer

dwarfism is a more acceptable term.

Charlie McGarrahan agreed: "People associate [midgets] with the circus and circus freaks."

At 4 foot 10, McGarrahan is at the high end of the height scale of dwarfs, 7 inches taller than Jackie. Their cozy ranch house in Winthrop Harbor makes few concessions to their limitations. All the rooms have standard-size furniture, but the pair resorts constantly to stepstools and ladders, although Jackie admitted, "I can't climb like I used to" after back surgery.

In their Riverwoods home, Bill and Judy Gootjes, who are average size, chose to scale down some of the rooms in the spacious ranch home for their daughter Aimee. One corner of the kitchen has a low cabinet with sink, microwave and toaster, easy for 13-year-old Aimee to reach. Her bedroom has a customized desk, mechanically operated blinds with a switch she can easily reach, and a low bed. Her bathroom has been miniaturized with a tiny vanity and toilet.

Although the terms handicapped and disabled often are used interchangeably, Aimee's

father, Bill, who is 6 foot 5, said that in his view disabilities are the physical problems afflicting someone, and handicaps are things in the external environment that cause limitations.

Aimee, a pretty, curly haired teen, had surgery at age 2 for compression on the spinal cord, a fairly common condition in dwarfs. Even though the problem was relieved, she has suffered from neurological damage. Even more serious is her inability to walk substantial distances.

Fortunately, she can scoot around in her own personal mobility vehicle, called a Pony. Her father drives her to Caruso Junior High School, where she is in 8th grade, but when she transfers to Deerfield High School, she will be transported on a bus with special lifts.

Yet if physical limitations were all that these little people had to contend with, life wouldn't necessarily be all that hard. It's people's attitudes that often are a problem.

Christine Peterson could be considered a champion at overcoming. A freshman at Illinois State University in Bloomington, she is majoring in special education. Not surprisingly, as a high school vol-

unteer working with special children she said she found "an immense connection [to special-needs children], the greatest feeling, knowing you're helping someone."

Her mother, Jennifer, was proud of Christine's ranking in the top 10 percent of her graduating class at Libertyville High School.

"Chrissy is an example of how one can overcome problems," she said. "We've tried not to shelter Chrissy, because sheltering really hurts them when they go out into the harsh outside world."

The hardest part is her social life. Even though she has a group of average-size friends she's comfortable with, it's difficult when they pair off. Happily, she has met and dated several young men through Little People of America.

At 13, Aimee Gootjes hasn't had to confront the dating scene yet. Except for her stature, she's like any other teen. She likes movies, sleepovers, TV, malls, talking on the phone.

Her father admits to sometimes being overly protective. "I once feared callousness and sometimes encountered rudeness," he said, "but we really have never run into any bad experiences, at least not while I'm around. At home, her littleness recedes out of our minds."

Beyond the societal problems, there is the practical one of finding clothes that fit. Learning to sew or taking clothes to a tailor or dressmaker to shorten or alter is routine.

Jackie McGarrahan and Lois Dolinajec said they can find certain clothes, such as T-shirts and tops. Though they can fit in some children's sizes, they have trouble finding something that isn't childish in design.

Finding shoes is even more difficult, and usually they have to buy them in children's departments.

Men's clothing can be found, but it takes a lot of searching to find suits.

But the little people have learned to persevere. To a person, they said they never lose sight of the Little People of America's motto: Think big!

And, one might add, think funny.

"You need a sense of humor," Christine Peterson said. "You can't feel like your life is a sob story. I just look at it as a part of life. Most of the time if someone stares at me, I just smile at them and then it's okay. If someone asks me why I'm so small, I say my mom put me in the washer and I shrank."

Chicago Tribune

Tempo Lake

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1995

FOR THE CHILDREN

There are never enough foster parents, but the need for minority families is critical.
See page 3

INSIDE SECTION 17

Schools.....	2
Yesterday.....	2
Spotlight.....	3
Calendar.....	5
Club Hopping.....	5

Here are some facts about dwarfism

Booklets from the Human Growth Foundation in Minneapolis provide these statistics on dwarfism and the genetic outlook for the offspring of dwarfs:

Although there are more than 200 types of dwarfism, 50 to 60 percent are achondroplasiacs. The condition occurs about once in every 40,000 births and in both male and female children. Nine out of 10 are born to normal-size parents, but the gene then passes from one generation to the next.

Jackie McGarrahan, one of nine children, is the only dwarf; Charlie McGarrahan had three average-size siblings.

Christine Peterson, who is 4 feet 3½ inches, has a brother, Troy, who is 6 foot 3.

But just what are the characteristics of a dwarf?

Definite body abnormalities identify a dwarf at birth, even though most are born at an average weight and length: 7 or 8 pounds, 20 inches.

Short limbs and a large head in comparison to the rest of the body, combined with a normal torso and a prominent forehead are the obvious characteristics. There has been no way to detect the gene that causes dwarfism before delivery.

Dwarfs suffer more health problems than average-sized people. The exaggerated forward curve to the lower spine contributes to back problems and

gives a sway-backed appearance. Most have bowed legs.

Their lifespan is no different from anyone else's except, possibly, in the early years when babies may have a pressure problem on the base of the skull.

Even though the average male is 51 inches in height and females 48.6 inches, there have been instances where a dwarf measured only about 2 feet tall.

At a recent Little People of America convention in Denver, Christine Peterson found she was one of the taller conventioners.

Here are some statistics on how dwarfism is passed on genetically. If two dwarfs with achondroplasia have a child, there is a 25 percent chance the child will be of average stature and a 75 percent chance the child will have achondroplasia.

If one spouse has achondroplasia but the other is average size and they have one average height child, there is no chance that this child will have children with achondroplasia.

There is a 50 percent probability that the couple's next child will have achondroplasia.

A husband and wife who do not have short stature and have one child with achondroplasia have no chance that their next baby will have the condition. There also is no chance that their unaffected children will have offspring with this disorder.

Viewpoint

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

salad. America claims equality on paper and in theory; however, Americans cannot get beyond their own prejudices. . . .

"Americans have an ambition to be a clone of the 'typical' American. What is the 'typical' American? The one who is the right color, shape, size and intelligence. If you are not in one or more of these categories, then you are subject to anybody's and everybody's prejudice. . . .

"Like every parent, my parents expected a healthy, normal child with 10 fingers and toes. Well, I had 10 fingers and toes, but something was wrong. Shortly after I was born, the doctors detected an

abnormality in regard to the proportion of the limbs of my body. They called this symptom achondroplasia dwarfism. . . . The (doctors) painted a grim picture of what my life would be like. They suggested that a person like myself would be best suited for a career in a carnival or in a labor job that required a small person to fit in a small place. . . .

"Medical studies of human beings prove that there are no perfect human beings. My imperfections happen to show on the surface, so society views me as different. I am not angry or bitter with the American people and their prejudices. I have learned to adjust and accept society the way that it is. Why can't society do the same for me?"

Speaking Freely: Conquering the Fear of Making a Speech

WEST

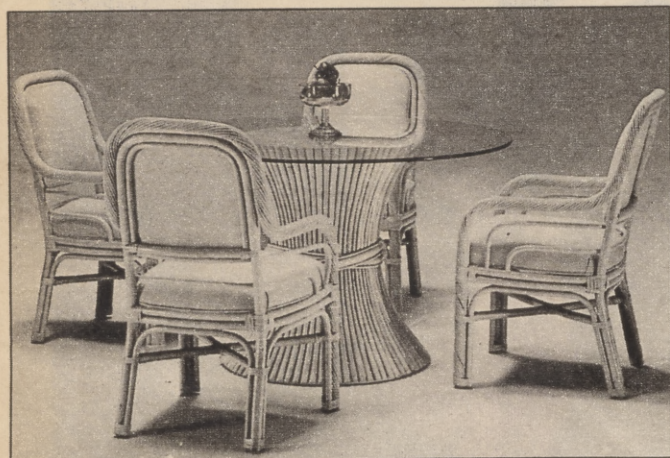
Eye
to eye,
heart
to heart

When the Little People of America gathered for a convention, some found love, others friendship, and still others found themselves.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS / FEBRUARY 14, 1993

Rattan . . .

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SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS / FEBRUARY 14, 1993

WEST

FEATURES

And now for a few words

8

By Kathleen Parker Cleveland

What, me speak in public? Only after attending William F. Buckley's brother's speaking school.

Cover story: Both great and small

12

By John Wolin



PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY PARKER

Author Wolin, right, chats with Oakland artist Ricardo Gill at the convention of the Little People of America held in San Francisco last summer. For participants, it was a meeting full of discoveries.

DEPARTMENTS

Primer: James Reed

4

San Jose's own Donner Party celebrity.

Close-ups

6

Hugh Hefner, the sexual revolutionary himself, plans to spend Valentine's Day with his wife and child. Plus, is another

Reagan offspring about to write a tell-all novel? And more.

Food: The layered look

20

Sandwiches that require a knife and fork.

The Far Side

22

Dave Barry

23

Cover photograph by Gary Parker. Romance blossomed at the Little People of America convention for Astri Solaas of Norway and Samuel Roloff of San Francisco.

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WEST is published each Sunday by the San Jose Mercury News, 750 Ridder Park Dr., San Jose, CA 95190. WEST editorial offices: (408) 920-5796 or, to leave a recorded message, (408) 920-5775. WEST advertising offices: (408) 920-5686. Contents ©1993 by the San Jose Mercury News. Represented by Newspapers First and Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers Inc. The publisher cannot accept responsibility if unsolicited articles and artwork are lost or damaged. WEST is a registered trademark of the San Jose Mercury News.

By John Wolin
Photography by Gary Parker

Both Great & Small

THE HOTEL STAFF HAD BEEN WELL-briefed and reacted with poise, as if having 500 or so dwarfs as guests was an everyday occurrence. Some of the guests found fiberglass milk crates in their bathrooms—something to stand on so they could reach the sink.

A set of bleacher-like stairs, the kind you usually see next to stages, had been rolled in front of the registration desk. A woman from California stood on the top step, bringing her eye to eye with the clerk.

When my turn came, I stayed put, at ground level. I'm not sure why. Maybe because much of my life is spent craning, and I always have managed to make myself understood. Maybe I didn't want to crowd the woman on the top step.

Maybe I wasn't ready to become just another dwarf.

Pam Prentice, the woman on the top step, followed me to my room, chatting enthusiastically along the way, almost hyper as she introduced me to what became a numbing number of other dwarfs. I knew Pam only because she advertises her exercise video in the Little People of America's national newsletter and I had called, seeking not the video, but a contact, a friend to guide me through this immersion.

For five days in a hotel on San Francisco Bay this summer, I became part of a world I had always avoided. Those first minutes, I was a stranger among my own people.

Pam and I reached my room without benefit of the rug-covered box in front of the elevator buttons. I rested on one elbow on the edge of the bed, humbled and bewildered by the uncertainty of the days to come.

The shortness of Pam's legs drew her to the front of a cushioned chair, where her knees

could bend so her feet wouldn't stick straight out like little Edith Ann's in Lily Tomlin's old "Laugh In" skits. Pam was much quieter now. She sensed my unease. She was years, a lifetime of self-acceptance, ahead of me.

"You know, you're tall," she said.

The tangent streaked not just out of the blue, but out of any reality as I knew it.

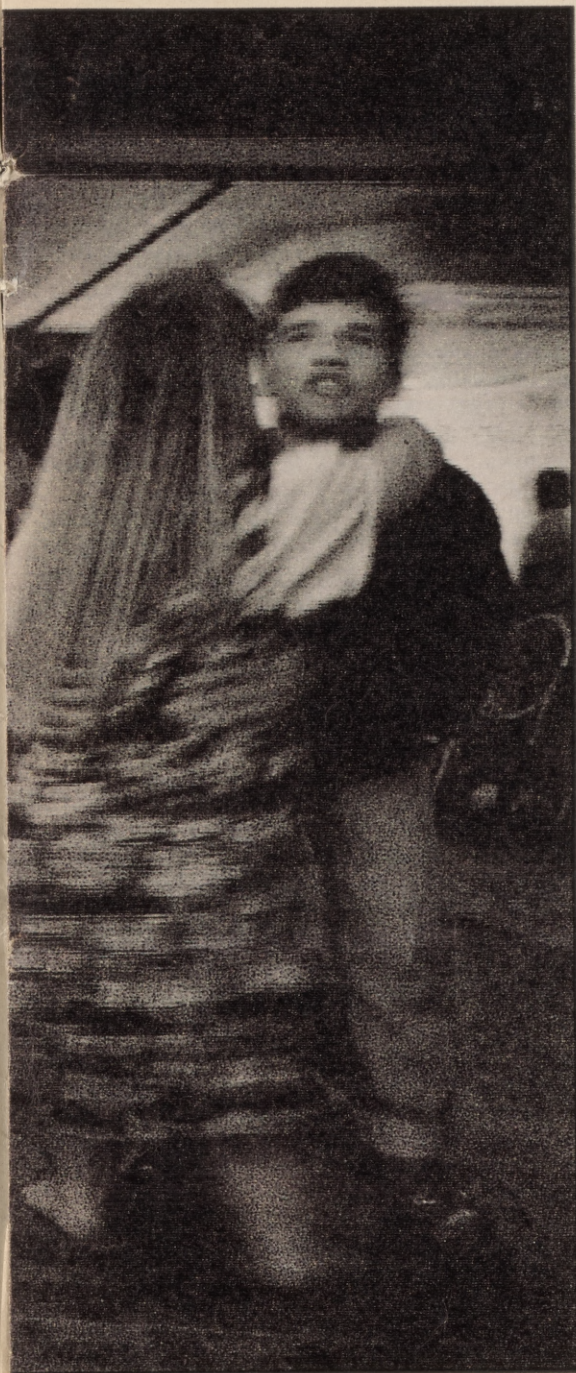
I am 4 feet 7 inches tall, which is not tall at all. Yet she was right. Downstairs, there had been hundreds shorter, some much, much shorter. Where I have needed help reaching cereal boxes high on grocery shelves, their own kitchen counters are in a no-man's-land somewhere over their heads.

"And you're handsome," she said.

I was somewhat embarrassed and buoyed not at all. I wanted to flirt back. I found her pretty, kind, bright. But I couldn't. I needed a few minutes alone. I wanted her to leave. I wanted to postpone, just for a few minutes, what lay ahead.

Downstairs, I would be a first-timer seeking acceptance, yet not quite sure I wanted it. I would, at age 45, learn that these strangers knew my needs and fears better than my best friends. Downstairs, in the lobby and dozens of meeting rooms, were gathered my people—people who in the next five days would unconsciously teach me things about myself that I will need years to fully absorb.

THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE BUFFET TABLE for the opening-night supper forces us to stare, then snicker, a smile crossing every face. In a misguided effort to make things "accessible" to its convention of dwarfs, the hotel management has gone ab-



ABOVE: A dance concluded the convention held by the Little People of America in San Francisco last summer.

LEFT: The convention celebrated the diversity of its participants. **RIGHT:** The obstacles faced by some participants is dramatized by the difficulty Julie Rotta has in handling even a standard-size chair.



SMALL

surdly underboard. Dressed in heavy white cotton, laden from end to end with hamburgers, hot dogs and the rest of the necessities for a picnic, the table appears to have had its legs knocked from beneath it and bears its load a foot, perhaps a few inches more, off the floor.

Parents hustle after the youngest of the children, who want nothing more than to crawl onto a platter of sliced tomatoes. Most of us have to bend over—a most unusual experience—to reach our food. It would be amusing, the irony of ironies, were it not for the fact that so many of us sit high above the food in wheelchairs and others have had our spines fused and cannot bend at all.

My confreres react with a dignity that dwarfs the situation. There is no embarrassment, no thought that someone has pulled a cruel joke. There is no panic, no anger, none of the angst that surely would blossom were a more traditional group of human beings to face a similar inconvenience. We are, if nothing else, emotionally flexible.

Seeing us all in one room, seeing now perhaps really for the first time the individuals that blurred past when I arrived just hours ago, I am bolstered by our many differences. Get past the fact that we are all fairly short or very short or inconceivably short, and we are as different, as distinct one from another as are the Lions or the Elks or—to carry it to an extreme—the Democrats.

To my right, a young man shares the horrors of custom-made shirts that aren't custom-made at all, but rather custom-assembled of ready-made pieces, once leaving him with his pocket tucked into his pants. A bit beyond, Israeli politics and German technology are debated. And to my left, Pam demonstrates one of the great advantages of being short: Knee-highs serve as her stockings, leaving friends and co-workers jealous over the number of patterns she finds.

Many of us are in wheelchairs, or on electric scooters, implements necessary because our dwarfism has misshapen our spines, robbing our legs, and sometimes arms, of their strength. Most of the wheelchairs speak of permanence. They are Winnebago-like with bumper stickers and orange reflectors, a pair of crutches and an oxygen bottle, a purse and even a cellular phone stowed just so.

On the way to the ballroom, even struggling down the corridor on two canes, I had easily passed a woman half my height, walking with the aid of a cane no longer than a maestro's baton. I cannot help but imagine how much time and energy she expends just getting from place to place. I will see her time and again, but I will never see her smile.

We have split ourselves off more or less by age, leisure suits at one table, T-shirts and jeans at another, Izods and button-downs moving between. Little People of America was founded by movie and television actor Billy Barty in 1957 as Midgets of America. He is here, sitting with his peers, but almost always also cocooned by children who love to gather

at his side.

Much besides the name has changed. Entertainers like Barty are rare among us tonight. We are lawyers, teachers, engineers and other professionals. The circus is behind us, notwithstanding the full-page ad in the LPA newsletter recruiting dwarf stunt persons, actors and acrobats for a new George Lucas movie.

Many of us are involved in making sure those like us and unlike us get an even break.

Tonight's opening speech will be given by Deborah Morris, a young woman in a blue suit, Betty Boop earrings as her accessory. Her subject: the Americans With Disabilities Act, a body of law that provides the hope of equal opportunity for many in the room. Morris and other LPA members worked for the ADA's development and passage. But in a speech that draws from Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Lincoln, she will point out that the ADA itself discriminates by aiming most of its protection at those in wheelchairs.

Largely forgotten are the limitations and needs inherent when everything in your world is designed for someone with a body twice as large.

Morris opens an old wound: Should those of us who are short—and understand that I am talking about people who at maturity may be only 2 or 3 feet tall—yet in no way crippled, consider ourselves disabled? It is a question that goes unanswered.

Later in the week, when a woman attorney who also is a dwarf explains that buses in some cities won't lower their wheelchair platforms to pick up a short person—though that person can sometimes barely see over the first step and would have to be a mountain climber to approach it—I find myself hurt and angry.

Still, I know that for so many in this room, the real handicap is the limitation imposed by some form of paralysis. My own life could not have changed more when the narrowness of my spine finally took its toll and I lost all but

"MY CONFRERES REACT WITH A DIGNITY THAT DWARFS THE SITUATION. WE ARE, IF NOTHING ELSE, EMOTIONALLY FLEXIBLE."



Actor Billy Barty, founder of Little People of America, talks with Cheryl Murphy, 13.

minimal strength in my legs at age 21. I can no longer jump to knock a sweater off a high shelf, though I do have a cane that I can hook it with.

For much of my life, being a dwarf has been entwined with paralysis. I knew, of course, that many dwarfs did not suffer from spinal damage.

In theory.

The fact was a shock: dozens of men and women my size walking with ease and grace. I do not walk around envying people of standard height. I feel different, not lesser. But here among people that—in some cases—I tower above, I feel that sharp ache of desire. I want what they have: healthy arms and legs. The Dwarf Athletic Association of America is holding its national games in conjunction with the convention. Sports is my specialty. Yet I do not attend a single event, not even the championship basketball game.

BETH TATMAN MIGHT BE THE LAST PERSON you'd imagine leading "IS THERE A SEXUAL PROBLEM? An Open Forum About LP Sex (open to 13 and older only)."

Tatman is confined to a mechanized wheelchair and appears uncomfortable, body parts rolled one on top of another. Life has not been kind: Metal rods support her spine and other brittle bones; her husband died several



The hotel supplied plastic milk crates for conferees, such as Laureen Zeno, to use as stepping stools.

years ago.

Yet Tatman is exactly who this audience of a couple of hundred in a hotel meeting room needs as a guide and mentor—someone who cannot just roll in and out of the hay without effort, someone who will never, ever, under any circumstances, be able to do it in a airplane restroom and then write *Penthouse* about the experience.

Many of us have trouble coupling. We may not fit together. Our limbs may be too short or too rigid to bend around our partner's. We may not be able to reach. Because of the spinal cord damage many of us suffer, we may have trouble with erections, or having achieved one, may find orgasm a guest with a mind of its own, appearing rarely, if ever, when desired. "Are you a member of the Dead Pecker Club or of the Dying Pecker Club?" Tatman will ask.

Tatman understands. More so, the anecdotes she shares let those in the room know they are not alone. It is not a matter of misery loving company, but of knowing that there are concrete reasons for the misery.

In the mid-'70s, Tatman began attending

sexuality seminars for women of short stature—given, unfortunately, by male doctors of average height.

"Once, at Johns Hopkins, this pediatrician passed out a vibrator and other goodies and we passed them around like hot potatoes, everyone was so afraid to hold them," Tatman begins.

"He showed slides of people getting into every position in the world. I raised my hand and said, 'I have six steel rods in my body. If I got into one of these positions, we'd need a blowtorch to get me out.'"

"That doctor's slides do not apply to us."

In the years that followed, in addition to serving Little People of America in more conventional roles, Beth Tatman became the camp counselor, the mother confessor, cutting away the mysteries and angst of sex among little people.

"There are a large number of people here who have not had any sexual activity at all," Tatman tells us. "Many in this organization have been married 10, 15 years or longer and have not consummated their marriage. They were not able to. That does not mean they do

not love each other very much. Many are fully satisfied."

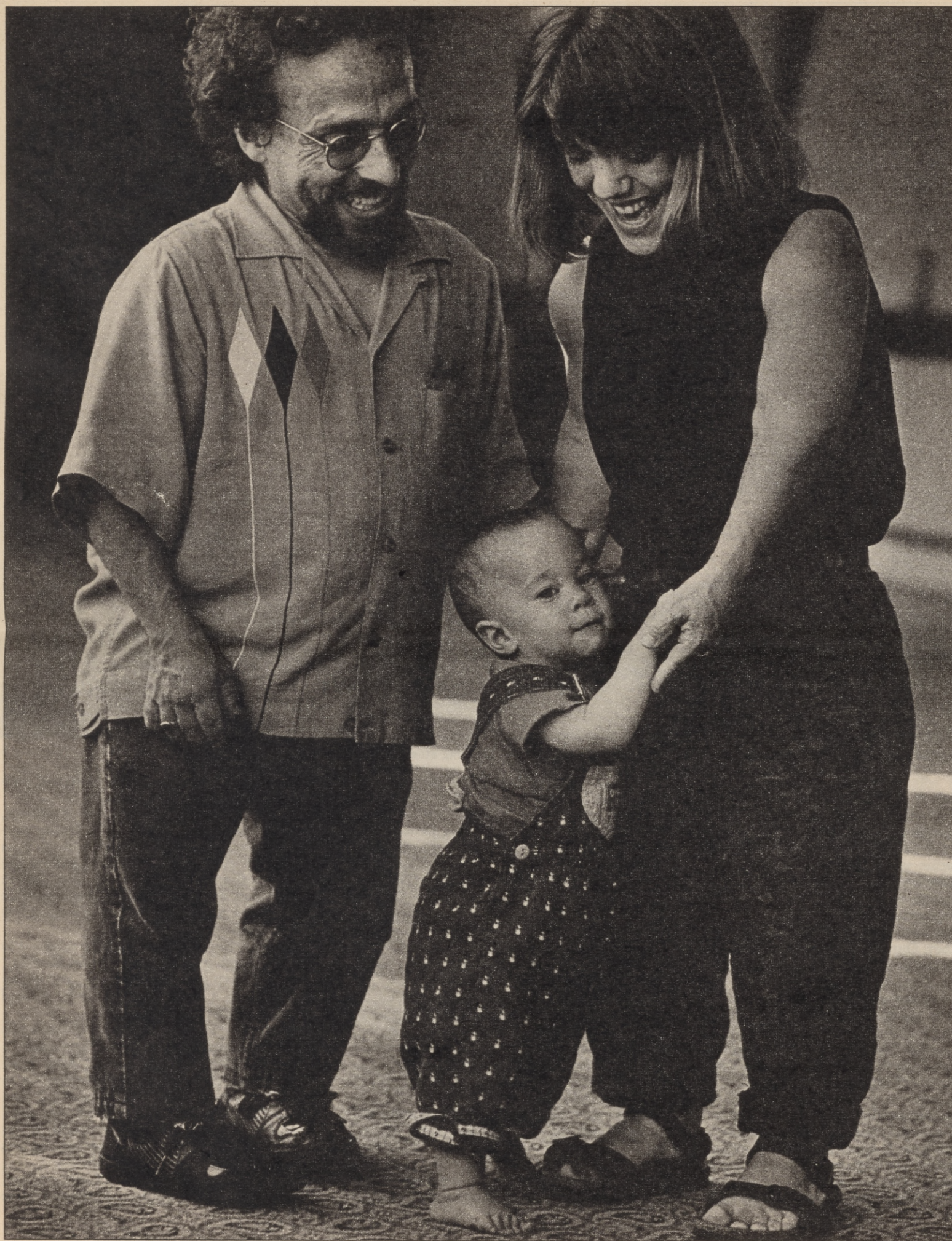
Now with a firm grip on her audience, Tatman turns her attention to the young people and in doing so draws me back to my own youth. There was very little dating. During the age when the shirt has to be the perfect pinstripe and the shoes just so, there is little desire to date a dwarf. The teen-age years are a difficult time to be different.

"Much of the dwarf population missed the years the basic ground rules were learned," Tatman is saying. "We're naive. We never leaned over in a movie and gently let a hand fall onto a breast."

She pauses. "First, we likely don't have the date. Second, our arms aren't long enough."

I lost my virginity the summer after graduating from high school in a whorehouse in Guatemala City, and as a young working man would satisfy my needs through the "day rate" offered by the hookers down the hall in my apartment building. My only other choice was unleavened frustration, and loneliness.

I never truly made love until I got married. "We can't just ask out two or three people



Ricardo and Meg Gill with their 11-month-old daughter, Lily, who is expected to grow to average height.

SMALL

and get a date," Tatman says. "The singles bars are full of average-size attractive men with no limitations who are shot down night after night, but eventually they find a girl."

We don't. Not when we're the only dwarf in the room.

Hence, one of the dangers of this convention. There are dwarfs all over the place. Young, single, eligible, horny dwarfs. Dwarf men who haven't quite learned how to flirt. Dwarf women on the way to the every-evening dance in miniskirts stretched tight and about one millimeter below outrageous.

Suddenly, the playing field is evened. For every young dwarf man who has spent the past year alone there is a dwarf woman who has endured similar frustrations. For every dwarf tired of being forever alone, the chance to find a mate has arrived, neatly packaged in a one-week hiatus.

So what's the problem? It's too easy to fall in love.

It's as if you're on a cruise and have met a very nice person from West Hempstead, N.Y., and for six days and five nights cannot think of anyone else.

Except that on a cruise, when Partner A returns to West Hempstead and you return to your burg, that's likely the end of it. There may be the occasional card and it may take a while for the image of Miss West Hempstead to disappear, but soon it will, among all your other friends and suitors.

It's different with us. In many other cases, there are fewer other friends back home. And in all but the rarest cases, there are no other suitors.

"Be careful with your expectations. People have waited a whole year to meet their mate," Ronald Piro, one of two speakers, announces at a seminar for first-time conventioners. "More times than not, they go home disappointed."

As much as we may want to think that the only barrier to love has been our stature, the reality is that for dwarfs, as for any people, making a good match is a rare accomplishment. Piro and others will warn that these conventions are famous for one-week courtships, nurtured with maid service, meals out, and a ready-made social schedule. Back in the real world, the pairings evaporate, no matter how desperately the lovers wish they might last.

I understand the emotion that creates instant couples. For much of my life I feared—and fear doesn't really do justice to the brutal emotion I felt—that I would never be married. Lack of a mate, lack of a partner in life, can make other problems seem trivial by comparison. Loneliness can be the most chilling prospect of all, the one that challenges even our will to live.

THE YOUNG MAN, A COLLEGE FRESHMAN, has his arm around his sister's back. Unlike her brother, who comes up to her shoulder, she is of average size, a

Boston University graduate student whose master's thesis will examine how the disabled are perceived. She could have been many places with many people this summer week, but is here with her brother.

There are so many parents and brothers and sisters here, whole families sitting vacation-like in the restaurant. Usually in the middle somewhere, there will be a child who sits lower than anyone else, one head far below the others.

I know that bond, because I have such parents, and such a brother and sister. Many years ago, in an attempt to make me taller, to stretch me, my own brother and sister had held me by the feet and tugged as I gripped, belly on the floor, the legs of a chest of drawers.

One morning early in the week, during a welcoming tea for the LPA medical staff, I sat in the corner of an overcrowded hotel suite with a father 6 feet, 4 inches tall, his 5-foot-10-inch wife and their 3-year-old son, Danny, an achondroplastic dwarf.

There were so many people in the room

and it was so hot that the father sought refuge under an air conditioning outlet, a stream of sweat staining the front of his polo shirt. His rough-and-tumble son cavorted like any other child his age, sprinting with the finesse of a bumper car from one end of the room to the other, disappearing between legs and under furniture. His smile was a beacon of joy.

Danny has had a difficult time. In addition to being short, with legs that threaten to bow, his head is larger than it should be because cranial fluid doesn't drain normally. In February 1991, a shunt was inserted into the upper right side of his skull and a check valve was hidden beneath the scalp near his ear, with a drain about the size of a pencil extending from there to his stomach. The plumbing keeps his head from swelling any further. The hope is that as he matures, the proportions will match up.

I listened with growing astonishment as the father talked about the day his son was born: "We were told about it in the wrong way. The staff pediatrician said, 'It seems we're the proud owners of something just short of a



The conference was full of informal meetings between participants and medical experts.

"I UNDERSTAND THE EMOTION THAT CREATES
INSTANT COUPLES. FOR MUCH OF MY LIFE
I FEARED THAT I WOULD NEVER BE MARRIED."

SMALL

circus act."

I would like to say that his story is an obvious exaggeration, extreme beyond belief. But I have heard too many stories like it.

A few minutes later, another very tall woman passed by and stared for a few seconds at the couple and their child, examining all three.

"My husband is 6 feet 4 inches and I'm 6 feet 1," she barked. "Don't let anyone tell you your height won't affect him. My daughter is 4 feet 1 and just 9 and a lot taller than some of them around here."

Some of them around here. From the mother of a dwarf, the mother of one of them. A bit of the real world had sneaked into the sanctuary, a woman cocky because her kid is the tallest midget.

THE ADULTS ARE MOSTLY IGNORING the platter of fruit, but the strawberries especially have the full attention of two little girls who move from the end table to their parents as if guided by a track. Tricia, 6, could be my own child, for we have a gene in common. I am sitting next to her father and she backs up against my knees, making it plain she wants to eat her strawberries sitting on my lap, head thrown back against my chest as if overcome by a monstrously funny thought.

Of all the emotions I will feel this week, the love she allows me is the most pure, the most simple. I am truly touched by this child, rescued at 20 months from foster care in Korea, where she had been given up by her natural parents when less than a year old.

Tricia has a sister, Lauren, nine months older, the natural child of Tricia's adopted parents. Both girls are achondroplastic dwarfs.

"At first I said, OK, let's give her an injection, let's get her well," the father said of the moments after Lauren's birth. Later, "all I wanted to know was would she have a normal life span and normal intelligence. ... The 'Yes' brought tremendous relief."

In the months and years that have followed the child's birth, the mother and father have immersed themselves in the world Lauren brought them. Tricia was adopted in part for "help, love and support for our daughter." And if you speak to the mother, and ask if she ever thinks about how different her adopted daughter's life might have been, about how much she has given that child, she will answer

that it is Tricia who gives.

The mother writes, edits and publishes a newsletter for families of dwarfs that informs on subjects as critical as the continuing misdiagnoses of dwarfs, both their types and problems, and as basic as learning how to protect a dwarf child so small that it might bump its head on the bathtub faucet.

After three years of a Montessori education, the two girls entered public school this fall. The meetings the mother had with administrators and teachers touched on every detail. Though the goal was to begin mainstreaming, there had to be concessions.

Tricia and Lauren need to sit on the floor and remove their panties before crawling up

onto a toilet. There is no need to expose them to a floor covered with the pee from poor-aiming little boys.

They use the teachers' restroom and have a small bench in there to sit on. They have been adopted by many and protected.

IT IS ALMOST MIDNIGHT AND NO ONE SLEEPS. The very youngest children dance, sometimes alone, a whirl on the floor, sometimes together, and sometimes in the arms of their parents.

They are bathed in the blue lights. One mother is on her knees, yet her child still comes up only to her breasts as she dances in her mother's shadow like a windup toy. Her



Astri Solaas of Norway and Samuel Roloff of San Francisco share the hours before her departure.

"THE SEMINARS ARE OVER. WE ARE HERE TO DANCE. AND SOME OF US ARE HERE TO MATE, OR TO GET AS CLOSE TO MATING AS POSSIBLE."

father, a tall energetic man, moves slowly from foot to foot with his older daughter cradled in his arms.

Taped music blares from speakers that more than ever seem oversize. A young man surrounded by lights as loud as the music adds to the pandemonium, a convulsing deejay shouting commands to those massed on the floor.

The seminars are over. The side trips to a national park and the national pastime are over. We are here to dance. And some of us are here to mate, or to get as close to mating as possible. The bodies on the floor have trouble keeping up with what the mind wants to do. But even terribly contorted bodies show no hesitation in trying. One man spins in the seat of his motorized scooter, like you may have as a child at a lunch counter, and I wonder if I could ever be that brave, that unafraid.

My moment comes when a woman from New York suggests we dance. The music is slow, something out of the 1960s and the emotion I feel as her warm cheek rests next to mine has nothing to do with my wife and child at home, nothing to do with true romance. What is has to do with is the overwhelming power of a realization:

Never before have I danced with a woman cheek to cheek.

SO I'M SHORT AND I HAVEN'T hung around much with people like me. It's something I never had to explain before. But there was a certain curiosity at the convention, a certain curiosity at home, both in the days of anticipation and after I returned home.

At the convention, it reached a point of concern that maybe I had been avoiding something—they, me, us, something.

And by having married a woman of average size, I had married outside of my own, and had thus in some way been a traitor. No one ever said as much, but there were questions that began leading in that direction, tilts of the head in a tsk-tsk

sort of way as others got to know me.

When I was in junior and senior high, I knew another dwarf, a hurt man confined to a wheelchair. He was one of the first people to point me in the direction of the surgeons at Johns Hopkins Hospital—a kindness which, in some sense, means I owe him my arms and my legs.

We share many pains, disabilities and frustrations, but we hardly know each other. I

have been to his house, but have never invited his family to mine. I do not believe that in all the years we have known each other we have ever had a decent conversation. Though I respect his courage from afar—he and his wife have adopted two dwarf children and are providing love and a home for children who sometimes go unwanted—I have no strong desire to begin a friendship some might feel is overdue.

Why? I have never wanted to allow my life to be dictated by my stature, or lack of it. A mother of a dwarf at the convention said over lunch one day that as much as she understood the challenges being faced by those around her, she could not be friends with everyone simply because they, like her son, were dwarfs: "We aren't," she said, "going to be friends because of a gene."

I understood what she meant and I knew she meant neither harm nor disparagement. It's just that when one is different, when what you are has the ability to determine who you are, there is an urge to resist.

But by midway through the convention, I had to wonder if in my urge to stand on my own—to resist the isolation I feared "special treatment" would bring—I had not missed

something important. I have black and white friends, male and female friends, friends who first spoke other languages, friends who are both happy and gay. Yet until San Francisco, until being befriended by people more like me than I knew, I had very few short friends.

At the end of the week, we are called together for a group picture, to be shot outside the hotel, photographers standing on the roof. A woman attorney from the Northeast walks quickly the other way, as if trying to flee a family fight.

I have yet to see her smile. I am told she hates being here, that she hates being one of us, hates every part of the social experience. I wonder how close I have come to being like her.

The sun shines brightly, the wind grabbing at us as it dances off San Francisco Bay. I stand with hundreds of other dwarfs as the hotel's bellhops try to help the photographer get everyone into the picture.

As I watched the attorney rapidly recede, I learned something new. To not be here would be to deny my own existence.

JOHN WOLIN is a reporter for the Miami Herald.

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*The more than 500
people who gathered for
the convention had
only this in common:
their size and their
quest for dignity.*





achondroplasia



The Human Growth Foundation is a voluntary, non-profit organization dedicated to helping medical science better understand the process of growth, particularly dwarfism. It is composed of concerned parents and friends of children with growth problems and interested physicians. Its objectives are:

- Support of Research
- Parent Education and Service
- Public Education
- Support training for growth specialists
- Pituitary Gland Collection
- Education of the Medical Profession

Text prepared by: Charles I. Scott, M.D.
Director, Medical Genetics Clinic
University of Texas Medical
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introduction

Dwarfism has long been of medical interest and records of dwarfs date back to prehistoric times. Many legends and myths surrounded people of short stature. Fortunately, medical science has stripped away much of the superstition.

The word "dwarf" brings to mind an abnormally proportioned body – one in which the head and trunk seem abnormally large in contrast to extremely short arms and legs. Those who are extremely short but have normal body proportions are generally known as "midgets".

The reasons why children have significant growth retardation are many. They include hereditary, dietary, infectious, hormonal and a host of other factors.

*The short child can
participate in most activities.*



Some children fail to grow properly because of primary bone disorders or chondrodystrophies. The most common form of these disorders, achondroplasia, affects about one child in every forty thousand births. It occurs in all races and in both male and female children.

achondroplasia

What Are the Signs of Achondroplasia?

An individual with achondroplasia has disproportionate short stature: the body size is essentially normal, the head is large and the arms and legs are short when compared to the body length. This shortness is particularly noticeable in the upper arms and thighs. Other signs are a prominent forehead, a flat or even depressed area at the base of the nose (between the eyes), a protruding jaw and poor dental structure — the teeth are crowded and the upper teeth are poorly aligned with the lowers.

A dwarf also tends to have a straight upper spine with an exaggerated forward curve to the lower spine. This presents a swaybacked appearance. His legs are almost always bowed and the elbows are enlarged. Usually, the arms cannot be straightened completely, and sometimes the person has limited twisting ability at the elbows. The hands are short and the fingers stubby. He generally has short, broad, flat feet. Another sign is loose or “double” jointedness, caused by lax ligaments. Many achondroplastic children can flex their finger, wrist and knee joints to an abnormal degree because of ligament weakness. This also contributes to their bowleggedness. These signs are apparent at birth and achondroplasia can be diagnosed at that time. Intelligence is generally normal.

*Motor milestones
may be delayed.*



How Tall Can The Achondroplastic Dwarf Grow?

Parents of achondroplastic children often ask this question. Studies have shown that affected adult males average 51.8 inches in height, while females average 48.6 inches. There seems to be little or no relationship between the height of the parents and the final adult height of achondroplasts.

Physical Problems

Achondroplastic dwarfs may reach motor milestones of development slowly. Example: good head control may not occur until the infant is three or four months old. This is because it takes longer to develop the muscular strength necessary to control the overlarge head. Many of these children do not walk until relatively late — some begin at 24 to 36 months. Ultimately, total development is normal.

Weight control seems to be a frequent and lifelong problem in this disorder. Both children and adults must be careful of their food intake because they are prone to add excess pounds.

Other complications include a tendency toward middle ear infections in the first five or six years of life, probably due to the abnormal drainage angle of the tube from the middle ear to the throat. The basic cause is faulty development of the bone structure. If these infections are not recognized and treated, or are resistant to treatment, the child may sustain significant loss of hearing. Each infection should be treated promptly and it's a good policy to have the child's hearing tested.

*Most children with growth problems,
apart from their size, are
as normal as any other child.*



Dental problems caused by overcrowding of teeth (especially those of the upper jaw) may occur. Malocclusion (poor bite) often results from this condition and makes good oral hygiene difficult. In addition to ordinary dental care, orthodontic bracing may be necessary.

The achondroplast's abnormally large head is often confused with hydrocephalus (excessive water on the brain). In achondroplasia, hydrocephalus may develop, but it rarely requires surgical treatment. Each case must be carefully diagnosed before the doctor can make the necessary decisions. Older children and adult achondroplastics frequently suffer numbness, tired feelings or pain in the lower back and thighs. Often these complaints are simple muscular problems which do not require special care. If they are persistent or severe, the person should be seen by a physician. Nerve or spinal cord problems are common because of the narrow spinal canal, particularly in the lower back.

If the child's bowleggedness is severe, braces and/or orthopedic surgery may be of benefit. Not all children require treatment for this condition.

What Are The Causes?

Statistically, nine out of ten achondroplastic dwarfs have average-sized parents, and no other member of the family is afflicted with the disorder. It is also hereditary — it passes from one generation to the next by a single gene. A person with this gene shows all of the symptoms of achondroplasia. It is not possible to have a little bit of achondroplasia or "only a touch of it". A person either has it or he does not. When two average-sized parents

*Parents need to know
what to expect
as the child grows older.*



have a dwarfed child, the medical cause is a chemical change (mutation) in one gene from one of the parents. The cause for this mutation is not known, nor can we determine whether the mutated gene came from the mother or the father. At present, much investigation is being done in this area.

Two non-achondroplastic parents have little or no chance of having more than one dwarfed child. However, an accurate and very specific diagnosis should be made to establish that the child is indeed achondroplastic. The tendency in the past was to diagnose everyone of short stature as achondroplastic when, in fact, they had any of seven or eight other conditions. Before counselling can be attempted, the diagnosis must be exact.

What Are The Inheritance Risks In Achondroplasia?

The parent with achondroplasia runs a 50% risk that any given pregnancy will result in a dwarfed child. By the same token, the parent can also have average-sized children as well as affected children. In a number of cases, dwarfed parents have had children who grew over six feet tall as adults. A normal child of such parents will not pass achondroplasia on to his or her children. These risks are summarized in the accompanying table.

*Short children can handle
all of the responsibilities
of other children.*



My spouse and I do not have short stature.

We have a child with achondroplasia.

What is the probability that our next baby will have
this condition? 0%

What is the probability that our unaffected children will have
offspring with this disorder? 0%

I have achondroplasia but my spouse does not.

We have a child who is of average height.

What is the probability that this child will have children
with achondroplasia? 0%

What is the probability that our next child will have
achondroplasia? 50%

What is the probability that our next child will not
have achondroplasia? 50%

My spouse and I both have achondroplasia.

What is the probability that our children will inherit
this condition? 75%

What is the probability that we will have a child of
average stature? 25%

*The example of well adjusted adults
of small stature, helps the child
and his parents to a realistic
awareness of himself and helps him
see the range of possibilities ahead.*



Pregnancy Problems

Female achondroplastic dwarfs who become pregnant should have very carefully supervised prenatal care by an obstetrician. Delivery is always accomplished by Caesarean Section.

What Can Be Done?

At present, there is no specific treatment for the disorder. Growth hormone shots do not increase height and there are no other known treatments that will. Current therapy is based primarily on problems other than stature, or in trying to prevent complications. The family physician with the help of certain specialists such as endocrinologists, geneticists and pediatricians can give your child the benefit of current knowledge and practice. A great deal of research is being done on achondroplasia and other growth problems in special evaluation and research centers across the country.

Two organizations with concern for those with growth problems and short stature are Little People of America (LPA) and the Human Growth Foundation (HGF). Both groups offer opportunities for parents to meet others with similar problems. Each organization has close contact with the medical profession to help refer interested individuals to the experts nearest them.

It is important for the achondroplastic dwarf to recognize that there is a whole range of occupational choices and that it is not as narrow as usually presumed. Contact with other well-adjusted dwarfs demonstrates these possibilities and allows him to "Think Big" (motto of the LPA).

This brochure was made possible through the generosity of the Paul & Annette Himmelfarb Foundation, Inc.



human growth foundation

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Contributions to Human Growth are tax deductible

For more information, contact your local chapter of HGF.

DWARFISM

**...why
some kids
grow up
to be
small**



What causes dwarfism?

There are hundreds of causes of dwarfism—disease, improper nutrition, glandular disorders, hormone failure and inherited short stature just to name a few. All the causes of slow growth are too voluminous to deal with here but some of the more common types are listed below.

CHROMOSOMAL DISORDERS—The most common chromosomal disorder is called the Turner's syndrome which is found only in girls. While scientists have been able to identify the chromosome abnormality they have not yet discovered its cause nor its cure. Girls with Turner's syndrome rarely grow to 5' tall and do not develop normal sexual characteristics.

INHERITED SHORT STATURE—Short parents tend to produce short children making genetic short stature the most prevalent of all types of dwarfism in the United States. Scientists are currently experimenting with human growth hormone (HGH) injections to help these children grow taller. Without help, some may grow no taller than 5' but will be normal in all other development.

DELAYED PUBERTY—Normal adolescents experience a spurt of growth during puberty but some have a delayed puberty of 2 to 6 years. By the time they experience puberty their bone structure is too mature to react to a growth spurt and many of these children remain short. This delay is often inherited from one or both parents.

BONE DISEASES—A recent scientific paper listed over 100 distinct bone diseases associated with short stature. Their medical names are usually tongue-twisters like achondroplasia, fibrous dysplasia, hypophosphatasia, mucopolysaccharidoses, osteogenesis imperfecta, etc. They result in deformed, shortened or otherwise abnormally developed bones for thousands of children. One of the most common of these is achondroplasia which is characterized by a pronounced shortness of the arms and legs while the head is frequently large and the trunk normal size.

PRIMARY GROWTH DISTURBANCES—Children with primary growth disturbances seem to have body cells that do not respond to the usual growth promoting factors. They have small proportional bodies and some have associated malformations of the head, ears, skin, brain or one side of the body. One example is intrauterine growth retardation.

SECONDARY GROWTH FAILURE—Serious disease and strong drugs used in the treatment of disease may stunt growth. The

disease or drugs may disturb bodily functions and produce an imbalance severe enough to slow down growth. Loss of appetite, damage to vital organs, vitamin and mineral imbalance, etc., can all result in poor growth and can all be caused by disease or drugs.

HORMONE FAILURE—Growth is controlled by hormones produced by the pituitary gland. An organ about the size of a pea, the pituitary must produce enough human growth hormone (HGH) to affect normal growth. When it does not, hypopituitary dwarfism occurs. An adult hypopituitary dwarf may look like a child of 10 and usually has arrested sexual development. However, intellectual development, as in the case of most types of dwarfism, will be normal.

NUTRITIONAL SHORT STATURE—Chronic malnutrition will prevent children from reaching their full genetic growth potential. Most common among these are children with a protein deficiency. If a child remains protein starved until the age of 5, the growth damage will be permanent.

Can dwarfism be cured?

Until recently little attention has been paid to the causes and cures of dwarfism. Research now is being conducted in all types of growth problems. With an estimated 500,000 children in the United States suffering from growth problems, this research is extremely important and long overdue.

One of the first breakthroughs in growth research was the discovery that human growth hormone could be extracted from the pituitary gland and injected into hypopituitary dwarfs to induce growth. Since 1963, HGH has been used in tightly controlled research projects to stimulate growth in over 500 dwarfed children. HGH promises to be a solution to hypopituitary dwarfism and a possible help to some other causes of dwarfism. Unfortunately, the supply of HGH depends directly on the donations of human pituitary glands—animal glands are not useable. Each child on the program needs from 50 to 200 pituitaries per year and the annual pituitary donations are only enough to accommodate a very limited number of children. Most of the children suffering from hypopituitary dwarfism cannot receive HGH treatments because there simply aren't enough pituitary gland donations to cover the need.

Synthesized hormone may be the next step in solving this problem. In early 1971, HGH was synthesized for the first time. It will take many more years to discover

how to produce the synthesized hormone in quantities large enough to help the many dwarfed children who need it. And for some, it will be too late. Once a child's growth years end (usually between 17 and 21) HGH can no longer stimulate further growth.

Is dwarfism really a handicap?

To some, it isn't. The pygmies of central Africa, the Negritos of the Philippines and New Guinea and the natives of the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean have been dwarfs for centuries. But in the American culture where the average male height is 5' 10" dwarfism presents a very real problem.

First, there is the physical problem of being too small to reach ordinary things like pay telephones, drinking fountains, mail boxes, wash bowls, door handles, elevator buttons and so much more. Then there is the problem of being too small to participate in normal activities like sports, dancing, bicycling, driving, etc. Then there is the exceptional difficulty in shopping, finding a job, leading a "normal" life in a world too large for some little people to handle.

Most tragically, there is a psychological problem that all dwarfs must learn to handle. The jeers of classmates, the stares from adults, the jokes, the teasing, the loneliness of being "different" all present serious problems to dwarfs. Many overcome them with the support of well-informed, loving parents and friends. Others are not so fortunate and add life-long

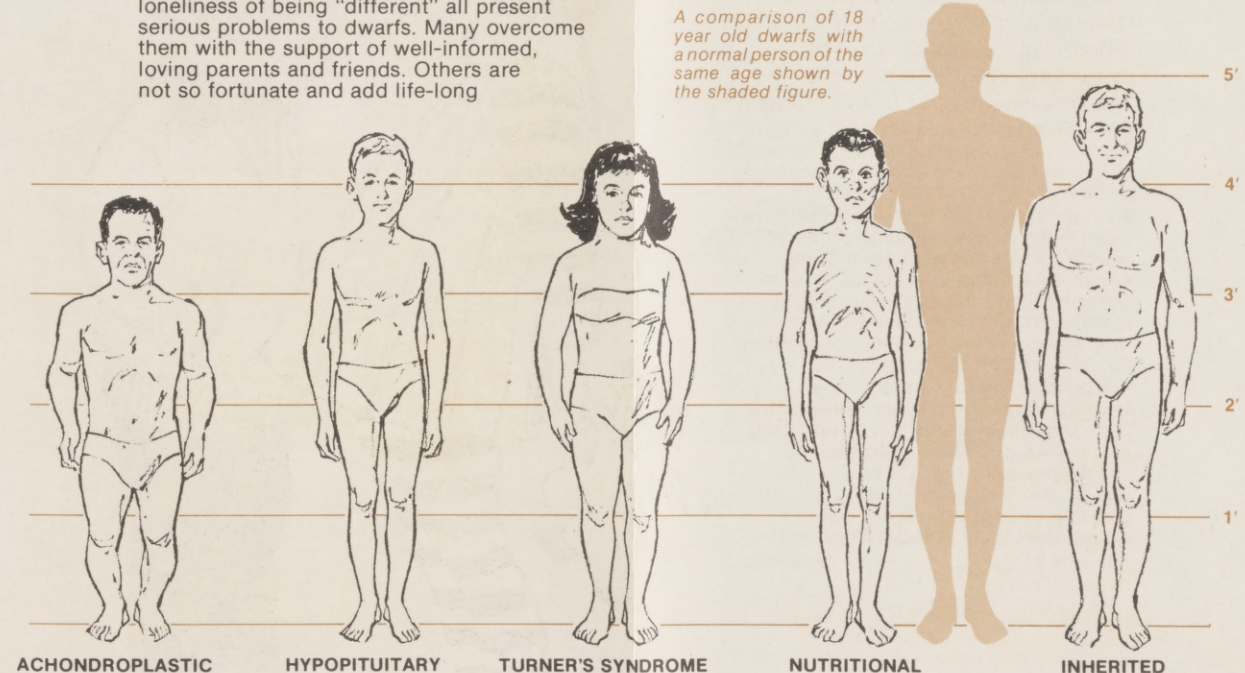
psychological problems to their already handicapped bodies.

Who can help a dwarf?

Everyone of us can help overcome the problems of dwarfism by:

1. Providing friendship and understanding to dwarfed children and adults. Treat them as individuals who want to be judged on their abilities and achievements, not on their stature.
2. Providing future dwarfed children with a chance for normal growth by willing your pituitary gland to the National Pituitary Agency for use in medical research and HGH treatment programs. Contact the Human Growth Foundation (address below) for complete details.
3. Supporting growth research with your contribution to the Human Growth Foundation. All donations are tax deductible.
4. Checking your own child's growth and reporting any abnormality to your family physician.
5. Informing your friends and neighbors about the problems of dwarfism and the needs to solve these problems.
6. Helping the parents of a dwarfed child with understanding, friendship and by helping them contact their nearest Human Growth chapter.

A comparison of 18 year old dwarfs with a normal person of the same age shown by the shaded figure.



Watching little Johnny and Suzy grow big and strong is a tradition as American as apple pie. Doting grandparents and proud parents lovingly measure each succeeding inch until their favorite little one is all grown up.

It's comforting to watch a child grow taller year by year. To see the obvious signs of strong, normal growth. But for some children this happy growing process never happens. Their growth is slow or deformed and they are destined to be dwarfs. Many of these children will appear normal at birth. Many have normal sized parents. Yet, as adults they will be less than 5' tall.

Statisticians tell us the average American height is increasing annually. Fifty years ago the average adult male was 5' 7" tall. Today he is 5' 10". Yet more than half a million American adults are less than 5' tall. And every year thousands of newborn babies are destined to join this category of "little people."

Some may escape dwarfism through new developments from scientific research. Others will not. What causes dwarfism? What can be done about it? The answers are far from conclusive, but there is hope.

Who is a dwarf? By definition a dwarf is any adult 5' tall or less. Some may be as short as 18". The words midget and dwarf are often erroneously used interchangeably to describe any adult of abnormally short stature. Midget correctly refers only to dwarfs with proper proportions, i.e. all parts of their bodies are proportionately small. Unlike midgets, some dwarfs are abnormally proportioned with normal sized heads and trunks but with extremely short arms and legs. Dwarfism is a physical characteristic and has little or no effect on mental ability and development.



How does the Human Growth Foundation help?

1. By providing families of children who have growth disturbances the opportunities to share experiences and resolve mutual problems.
2. By supporting medical research, training and treatment programs concerned with growth and its deviations.
3. By providing information on growth problems to physicians and to the community.
4. By acting as a clearing house for moral support or medical aid to families with children who have growth problems.
5. By assisting the National Pituitary Agency in the collection of human pituitary glands for use in research and HGH treatment programs.

Help a dwarfed child to normal growth. Support the Human Growth Foundation. All contributions are tax deductible.



human growth foundation

Maryland Academy of Science Building
7 W. Mulberry Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Write for details on pituitary gland donations and the address of your nearby Human Growth chapter.

DWARFISM

...why
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